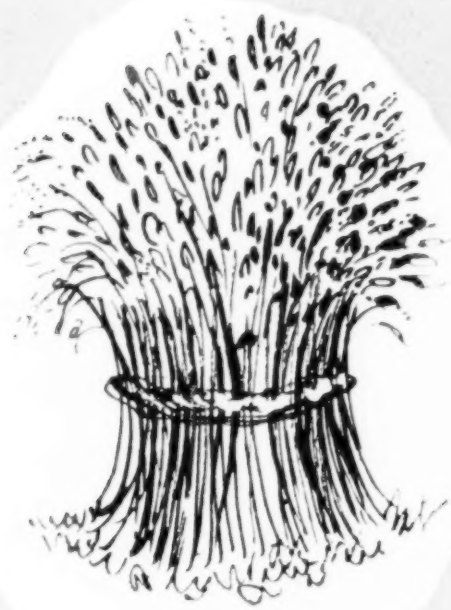


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THE CORNHILL



No. 1018

WINTER 1958/59

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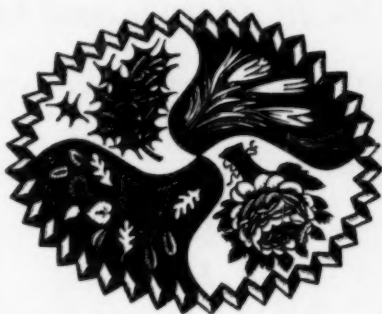
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THE CORNHILL



No. 1018

Winter, 1958/59

MAGAZINE

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JOHN MURRAY, 50 ALBEMARLE STREET, LONDON, W.1

At present the CORNHILL appears quarterly and will publish occasional Supplements containing work of up to 35,000 words in length.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

DORIS LANGLEY MOORE has written several novels, one biography, three books on costume and fashion; *The Vulgar Heart*, a study of public opinion, and a guide book to *Pleasure*, as well as scenarios for film, ballet, and television. She is Hon. Director of the Museum of Costume. Her new novel is shortly to be published by Cassell. Her knowledge of Byron and Byroniana, which has been built up over many years, is immensely wide. Recently she worked with the late Lady Wentworth on the Lovelace Byron papers.

PENELOPE MORTIMER has written several novels, including *A Villa in Summer*, *The Bright Prison*, and *Daddy's gone a-hunting*, which has just appeared (Michael Joseph). She is married to playwright John Mortimer and they have six children.

MARGIAD EVANS' last book was *A Ray of Darkness* (Arthur Barker): written after she became an epileptic, she told her story under the impact of this physical disaster, from which she has recently died. Her *Autobiography* was published in 1943. She also wrote *Country Dance*, *The Wooden Doctor*, *Turf or Stone*, *Creed*, *The Old and the Young*, and *Poems from Obscurity*.

PETER LUKE'S *Te Deum* is a personal view of the opening of the Battle of Alamein. Its publication so near to the publication of Field Marshal Viscount Montgomery's olympian view of the same battle adds to its interest. Before the war, Peter Luke studied painting. He is a writer, journalist, and a diamond-point engraver. He is at work upon a novel.

GORDON SHEPHERD has lived much abroad, especially in Vienna, where he witnessed the Austrian post-war struggle, later writing two books, *Russia's Danubian Empire* and *The Austrian Odyssey* (Collins). In 1948, he joined the foreign staff of the *Daily Telegraph*.

PETER GREEN, writer and critic, reviews novels for the *Daily Telegraph*. Amongst his published books are *Achilles his Armour*, and *The Sword of Pleasure*, which won the Heinemann award. He is now working on a biography of Kenneth Grahame to be published in March, 1959 (John Murray).



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The Burning of Byron's Memoirs

An account based on published and unpublished evidence

BY DORIS LANGLEY MOORE

The *Memoirs* written by Byron between 1818 and 1821 formed a substantial though uncompleted book. They were produced in three batches, and consisted of over four hundred pages (a hundred sheets) of folio paper—some of it, according to Byron's own description, very long and large. If it was the same as he used for certain compositions at this time, each page would probably have contained not less than three hundred words.

The theory that Byron's friends and family were bent on the suppression of some evil secret, which they supposed he had given away, will not hold water for a moment when it is considered that some or all of the manuscripts were read by a numerous group of persons who took no vow of silence. These included Lady Burghersh, Lady Davy, William Gifford, Lord and Lady Holland, Richard Hoppner, Washington Irving, Lord Kinnaird, the Hon. Douglas Kinnaird, Lady Caroline Lamb (who alludes to them scathingly in her little-known novel *Ada Reis*), Henry Luttrell, William Maginn, Lady Mildmay, Thomas Moore, Lord Rancliffe, Lord John Russell, possibly Samuel Rogers, and certainly Mary Shelley, who was paid a hundred pounds for her recollections of them. Doubtless Shelley too saw them while they were in her possession.

Byron wrote to John Murray (29th October, 1819): "If you like to read them, you may, and show them to any body you like—I care not." At various dates he suggested letting them be seen by critics of his conduct, and in August 1822, he had a fleeting notion of publishing them while he was yet alive.

An unauthorised copy of a portion, said to be about half, was taken by Lady Burghersh, who was requested by Thomas Moore to destroy

The Burning of Byron's Memoirs

it. There is only too much reason to believe that she did so. With Byron's permission another copy was begun by Dr. Williams a friend of Moore's, but as he had not sufficient application for the task, it was later continued by another friend, Dumoulin. After Dumoulin's untimely death, the work was finished by a professional copyist, unnamed. The three men were employed successively on one copy, and there is unhappily no warrant for the idea that several were made. The copy and original were in John Murray's hands at the time of Byron's death.

* * * * *

A LITTLE after eight in the morning on the 14th May 1824, John Cam Hobhouse was awakened by a loud and unaccustomed rapping at his bedroom door. As he hurriedly rose, already apprehensive, a packet of letters was handed to him labelled 'By Express,' and from their postal markings he could see they were of foreign provenance. He was seized with a dreadful foreboding which was not allayed by the sight of a note, delivered at the same time, in the handwriting of Douglas Kinnaird.

It was the seal of this that he broke first. Kinnaird was a convivial person who would not send early morning messages without reasons of urgency. He was also the man who maintained closer contact than anyone in England with their celebrated friend, Lord Byron, being his banker and trustee and the holder of his Power of Attorney.

The worst, the very worst, anticipations of evil tidings conceivable in Hobhouse's mind were instantly realised. Kinnaird's letter informed him that Byron was dead.

In an agony of grief [Hobhouse wrote that night in his diary] such as I have experienced only twice before in my life . . . I opened the despatches from Corfu, and there saw the details of the fatal event.

The first of these two prior agonies was one that Byron had shared—the shock and sorrow of learning, thirteen years ago, that a companion they were both devoted to had been drowned, entangled in water weeds, in the Cam. The second was the death of young Captain Benjamin Hobhouse at Quatre Bras. His brother had then set down with moving honesty: 'The whole loss of the British army in that fatal victory is in my mind reduced to one soldier.'

Doris Langley Moore

But this third grief was to transcend the others. The gifted young scholar, Charles Skinner Matthews, and the beloved brother, were known only in their own circles, and time, in the natural course of things, could cast his 'kind oblivious shade' over them: whereas Byron was one of the most notable and controversial figures in the Western world, passionately loved, passionately hated, his very name a storm centre: no one who had known him would ever have the remotest possibility of forgetting him, least of all the man who would have to deal with the hundreds of problems he had left behind him—his executor. And he had died at the age of thirty-six in circumstances to draw upon him even more than the usual measure of public attention. A foreign people had gone into mourning for him.

Among the documents which his kinsman, Lord Sidney Osborne, had sent by that portentous express, was the hurriedly printed decree of the Provisional Government of Greece commanding that the Easter festival be suspended, the shops closed for three days, and general mourning observed for twenty days, beginning at sunrise the day after his death with the firing of thirty-seven minute guns.

It was nearly a month since that melancholy tribute had reverberated along the swamps of Missolonghi. The news, though transmitted with all possible speed, could not come faster than sailing ships were able to carry it. Byron had died on the evening of the 19th April.

The little printing-press—doubtless the one which the poet had regarded as an absurd and exasperating toy in a country where few could read—must have been working all night to have the official announcement in circulation by the next morning.

I read this proclamation over and over again, [Hobhouse recorded] in order to find some consolation in the glorious conclusion of his life for the loss of such a man, but in vain. All our ancient and most familiar intercourse, the pleasure I had enjoyed in looking back to the days of our amusements at home and our travels abroad, the fond hope with which I had contemplated our again—in our own country—renewing the more than brotherly union which had bound us together, all our tokens of regard, nay, even our trifling differences—all burst upon me and rendered me alive to the deprivation I was now doomed to endure. . . . I shall take some calmer moments for recording some of the particulars of this calamity.

The Burning of Byron's Memoirs

Few that day were the calm moments. First there was a consultation to be held with Kinnaird and Sir Francis Burdett as to the apportionment of the most immediate duties. Sir Francis, another friend who had been concerned in business matters, agreed to break the news to Byron's sister; Kinnaird to distribute the letters from Greece to those most vitally affected, amongst whom was that very featureless Byron cousin, Captain George Anson Byron, R.N., the new lord. Kinnaird also made haste to get an accurate report to the press. Hobhouse wrote some hurried notes to members of Byron's former London circle and, later in the day, followed up Burdett's visit to Mrs Leigh. She was "in an afflicting condition," causing his own tears to flow afresh and uncontrollably. William Fletcher, who had served Byron as valet since the latter's boyhood, had addressed a letter to her in Hobhouse's care giving her, painfully, in ill-spelt groping phrases, with all the touching eloquence of a complete want of art, a description of her brother's illness and death.

"The reading of this letter," said Hobhouse, "tore my heart to pieces."

Yet even in the depths of his misery, Hobhouse did not fail to perceive that Fletcher had made a statement which enemies, if they heard of it, would seize upon as an excuse for accusations of either hypocrisy or cowardice: he had spoken of his master's desire in his latter days to have the Bible brought to him. Byron had written works adjudged to be depraved and blasphemous, and when blasphemers turned to the Bible in extremity, their opponents were not slow to make capital of the weakness. Hobhouse knew Byron always had that Bible near him—it was his sister's parting gift when he went into exile—and he was sure that "unless his mind was shaken by disease," there was not the least likelihood of his having been overcome by religious terrors. Mrs Leigh was adjured to be discreet on this topic, and she acquiesced . . . though grudgingly, for she was an orthodox Protestant and might have been glad to think, and let others think, that her brother had been enlightened at the end. But Hobhouse was a very masterful character.

Among the letters entrusted to him by Fletcher, there was also one for Byron's publisher, John Murray, and another for the valet's wife. If these were delivered in person, the first by Hobhouse

Doris Langley Moore

himself, the second by Kinnaird, due precaution could be taken against rumours of death-bed conversion. And there was another possibility which Hobhouse had determined to avert.

After it had been arranged with Captain Byron that he should go down to Beckenham in Kent and inform his cousin by marriage that she was a widow, Hobhouse was sadly reunited with Burdett and Kinnaird for dinner.

"We had a melancholy evening, recalling to mind the various excellencies of our dear friend."

These three distinguished and well-meaning gentlemen did not confine their conversation to affectionate reminiscences. In their ardent resolution to protect the memory of the still unburied dead, they formed a plan to secure and destroy an important manuscript which only one of them had set eyes on, and about the value of which the prime mover Hobhouse (who had not read it) was by no means equipped to form any judgement. The steps necessary to this drastic and high-handed proceeding occupied a large part of the three following days.

In the meantime, there were expressions of an acute public and private sense of loss on every side. The newspapers, so often hostile, were full of eulogy, the tender-hearted Miss Matilda and Miss Sophia Hobhouse wept tears that seemed unquenchable, and even the lady at Beckenham who had spent eight years meditating on grievances was reported by Captain Byron to be "in a distressing state." All these demonstrations gave a sombre satisfaction to Hobhouse, who, during nearly half of his thirty-seven years, had coaxed, admonished, quarrelled with, fought for, and loved the object of them; had shared with him experiences so bizarre that they would have seemed far-fetched in a novel; had seen him at his best, noble and generous, and at his worst, capricious and destructive as a fractious child.

And since the verdicts of men of questionable character whose knowledge of Byron was extremely limited have been so often quoted, it may not be irrelevant to consider the private summing-up, of a man of unquestionable character, who had spent as long in his company as all the other commentators put together :

The *Times* of yesterday announced his death in a manner which

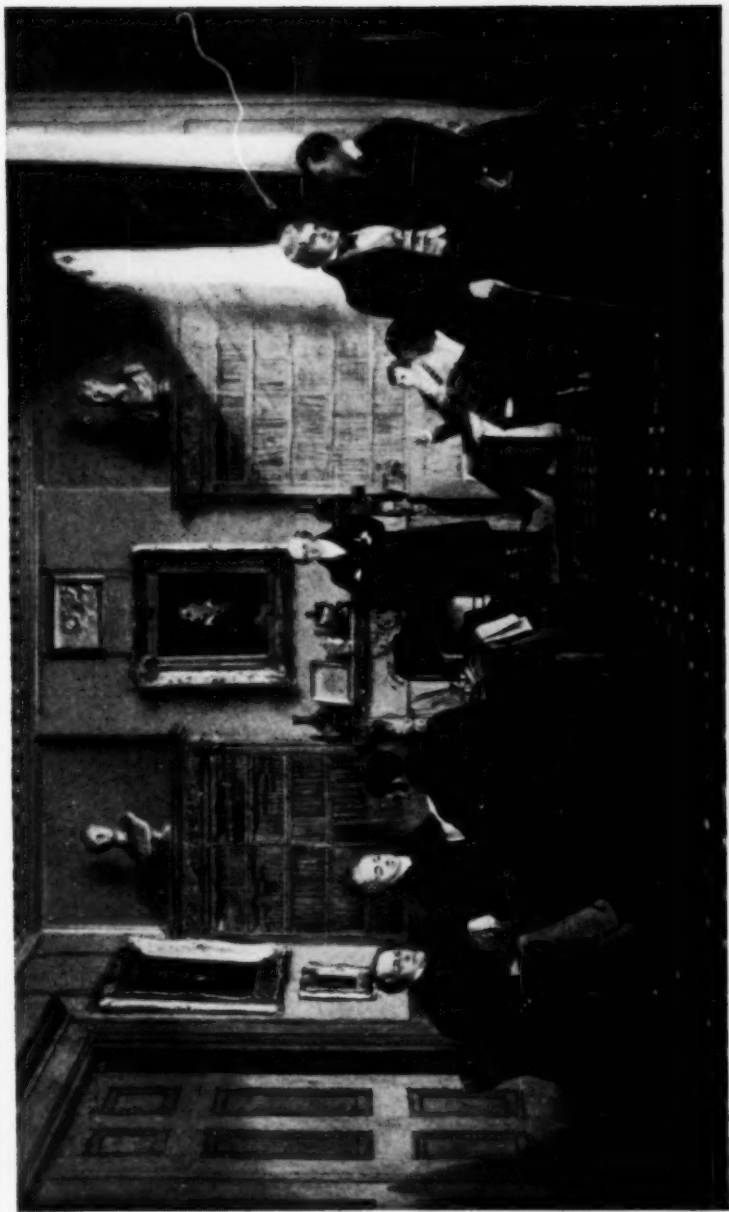
The Burning of Byron's Memoirs

is, I think, a fair sample of the general opinion of this event. The writer is, however, mistaken in saying that others may have been *more tenderly beloved* than Lord Byron, for no man ever lived who had such devoted friends. His power of attaching those about him to his person was such as no one I ever knew possessed. No human being could approach him without being sensible of this magical influence. There was something commanding, but not overawing in his manner. He was neither grave nor gay out of place, and he seemed always made for that company in which he happened to find himself. There was a mildness and yet a decision in his mode of conversing, and even in his address, which are seldom united in the same person. He appeared exceedingly free, open, and unreserved to everybody, yet he contrived at all times to retain just as much self-restraint as to preserve the respect of even his most intimate friends, so much so that those who lived most with him were seldom, if ever, witnesses to any weakness of character or conduct that could sink him in their esteem.

He was full of sensibility, but he did not suffer his feelings to betray him into absurdities. There never was a person who by his air, deportment, and appearance, altogether more decidedly persuaded you at once that he was well born and well bred. He was, as Kinnaird said of him, "a gallant gentleman."¹

When every allowance has been made for the emotion under which such a passage was written, there is extensive testimony both from Hobhouse's own diaries while his friend still lived and a most diverse assortment of other records that Byron did in fact have an extraordinary power of attracting and attaching people: but as is usual with those who enjoy this dangerous privilege, he also had an extraordinary power of attracting and attaching scandals. He not only appeared free, open, and unreserved, but he actually was so to an extent which gave a singular vividness to his communications; and, after a fairly complete severance from the fashionable and political circles of London in which Hobhouse himself had never ceased to mix, he had written his reminiscences. As if that were not indiscreet enough, he had annoyed Hobhouse intensely by making a practically unrestricted gift of them to the Irish poet, Thomas Moore.

¹ Diary—16th May 1824. Hobhouse elaborated and emphasised this tribute when Byron's monument was refused admission to Westminster Abbey in 1844.



MR. MURRAY'S ROOM AT 50 ALBEMARLE STREET IN WHICH BYRON'S MEMOIRS WERE BURNT

From a sketch by C. Werner, portraying the first meeting of Byron and Walter Scott in 1815

Left to right : Isaac D'Israeli, John Murray, Sir John Barrow, George Canning, William Gifford, J. W. Croker, Sir Walter Scott, Lord Byron



THOMAS MOORE

From a portrait by Sir Thomas Lawrence, R.A.



JOHN CAM HOBHOUSE

From an engraving of a portrait by A. Wivell

Doris Langley Moore

Being encumbered with debt, Moore had proceeded with Byron's full approval to assign them to John Murray for two thousand guineas—a transaction Hobhouse chose to describe in these acrimonious words: "Lord Byron made a present of himself to Mr Moore, and Mr Moore sold his Lordship to the booksellers."¹

It was this most valuable document which Hobhouse with reckless haste decided to have destroyed. His belief in his own mission to protect his friend's posthumous fame, combined (though this was a motive he could not himself suspect) with his long-standing jealousy of Byron's fondness for Moore, had blinded him utterly to the fact that such a measure would give detractors a first-rate start for any rumours they might care to set afloat, while even his admirers would feel that the revelations must have been deplorable.

The very day of the disastrous news from Greece, he began to organise his moral and material resources. With money which Burdett, Kinnaid and himself were generously ready to provide, he could, if permitted, buy back the *Memoirs*: with moral indignation—the more persuasive because he so earnestly felt it—he could make the perfectly open and legitimate bargain between Moore and Murray seem reprehensible: finally, striking while the iron was hot and everyone in a state of tension, he could stir up Byron's widow and sister to bring pressure to bear. He wrote to the one and went to see the other.

That sister—or rather, half-sister, the Hon. Augusta Leigh—had never seen the *Memoirs*, but Hobhouse, who broached the subject to her with urgency, was able to convince her that their destruction must be secured. She was a confused and malleable character, and, moreover, she had been subjected for years to an insidious undermining attack on her affection for her brother—a process giving rise to such anxieties that everything he did or said or wrote seemed fraught with awful possibilities. Like Hobhouse, she had been dismayed at his headstrong folly in persisting in the composition of *Don Juan* despite all sage counsels, and, like Hobhouse again, she deplored his association with Moore; so at a second interview she was prevailed upon to

¹ From the *Narrative of Events connected with the Destruction of Lord Byron's Memoirs* compiled by Hobhouse in 1825 from his diary of 1824, and published in *Recollections of a Long Life*, Vol. III.

The Burning of Byron's Memoirs

agree to an appointment for the purpose of receiving the manuscript as an object condemned.¹

Thence arose a vague understanding among the principals that they were meeting to carry out the wishes of Mrs Leigh. That they did not originate with her is shown in a variety of documents including Hobhouse's diaries, and a Memorandum of her own, all the verifiable details of which may be confirmed from other sources.

Hobhouse had expected difficulties with John Murray, for it would be natural for a publisher who had in hand an asset of such great commercial potentialities to be resolved to guard it. It was with some misgiving that he composed, on the 15th May, the following note to be delivered by hand at 50 Albemarle Street :

Dear Sir,

You would confer a favour on me if you would contrive to step here for one moment. I have a letter for you from Fletcher which I wish to put into your hand myself and to know from you whether there is any answer as the Courier that brought me the fatal news yesterday from Lord S. Osborne returns tonight.

Ever yours,

J. C. Hobhouse²

He required a good deal from Murray . . . the sight of Fletcher's letter that he might censor it if it ran on about his Lordship's devotion to the Bible, a promise to search out and destroy Byron's indiscreet letters and papers immediately, though their literary and cash value was immense, and a further promise to hand over the Memoirs. All mounting up to a rather tall order, probably the tallest order ever received by a publisher.

But instead of an antagonist, he found an eager ally ; one who, for longer than Hobhouse himself, would be glad to take the blame—or, as he certainly supposed, the credit—of having been the chief actor in the drama. John Murray in fact was burning with a belief in his mission not less impassioned than Hobhouse's own. How it had been ignited—whether spontaneously or at the prompting of Lady Byron's friends—remains enigmatical. Certainly those friends

¹ Byron's wife having been legally separated from him and his daughter still in her infancy, his sister was invariably treated as his next of kin.

² Murray MSS.

Doris Langley Moore

flung themselves headlong into the business of getting rid of Byron's testimony.

Not that Lady Byron, any more than her sister-in-law, had read the Memoirs, though a very explicit offer had been made to her to do so by the author of them, who had informed her that they contained a "long and minute" account of their married life and separation :

I could wish you to see, read—and mark any parts that do not appear to coincide with the truth. The truth I have always stated—but there are two ways of looking at it—and your way may not be mine. I have never revised the papers since they were written. You may read them—and mark what you please. . . . You will find nothing to flatter you—nothing to lead to the most remote supposition that we could ever have been—or be happy together. But I do not choose to give to another generation statements which we cannot arise from the dust to prove or disprove—without letting you see fairly and fully what I look upon you to have been—and what I depict you as being. If seeing this—you can detect what is false—or answer what is charged—do so—*your* mark shall not be erased.¹

But Lady Byron, whose calculating prudence had been a subject of remark some time before she had committed the one astonishing imprudence of marrying a highly-strung poet, had very deliberately rejected the opportunity. Another woman might have been unable to resist the temptation to learn exactly how a husband whose bitter and eloquent verses disclosed to the world his sense of injury would set forth the mutual disaster of their marriage ; but she had realised at once that she would be in a much stronger position if she refused to hear anything resembling a defence. It looked dignified and it baffled the vehement, communicative Byron. She had achieved an exemplary proficiency in this art of baffling.

On receiving that letter nearly four and a half years ago, Lady Byron had at once approached the closest of her numerous confidants, Colonel Francis Hastings Doyle, and asked him to confer with his sister, Miss Selina Doyle, and the lawyer, Stephen Lushington of Doctors Commons, who had acted for her in the Separation proceedings, and advise what could be done to repress this apparently irrepressible husband.

¹ Letter of 31st Dec. 1819. Lord Lovelace's *Astarte*.

The Burning of Byron's Memoirs

If I do not protest against the additional publicity [she had written] which he intends to give to our domestic concerns, I may seem to sanction the measure—I should not hesitate to add a strong declaration of my resolution to refute misrepresentation, were it not that I fear he might assume this as a pretext for immediate publication—if elated by confidence in his own powers, and desirous of the profit which such a work would produce.¹

She had followed up this letter with the draft of an answer she might dispatch to Byron, and although it is not the one she sent, it should be quoted as showing her reaction :

. . . I consider the composition of such a Memoir for present or future circulation as wholly unjustifiable, and I would not, even indirectly, appear to sanction it. . . .

In a few days Colonel Doyle wrote conveying Dr Lushington's suggestion that Mrs Leigh should be used as the instrument of suppression :

He conceives that if it were made to appear to Mrs L. that the consequences of this sort of controversy [i.e. Byron's being allowed to give his side of the matrimonial story] . . . would *inevitably* be at last the disclosure of everything she was most desirous to conceal—that such a letter or communication from her to him wd be sent as wd be likely to operate in deterring him from the commencement of this attack. . . . If you think that you can make Mrs L. the instrument of conveying that sort of intimation to Ld. B. that may deter him from the course he is about to enter—I think you should not be prevented by any consideration for her *immediate feelings*. . . .²

Lady Byron did not need to be told not to consider Augusta Leigh's immediate feelings, because she had long been persuaded that any sufferings she could inflict on her sister-in-law might be the means of saving a soul jeopardized by the ghastly crime of an incestuous love. She had reasons, however, for not using Augusta as her go-between in this instance, and she stated them at great length to her friend.

She wanted, she said, to be able to produce to anyone a copy of her declaration to Lord Byron, and if it were transmitted by Mrs Leigh "inferences contrary to the truth would be drawn from the fact

¹ Letter of 21st Jan. 1820. Lovelace Papers.

² Letter of 27th Jan. 1820. Lovelace Papers.

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of my treating her thus confidentially." Then, she had no reason to think Mrs Leigh could influence her brother. Besides, she might make "*her own comments*"¹ in conveying such a letter, and "they would combine together against me—he being actuated by revenge—she by fear—whereas, from her never having dared to inform him that she has already admitted his guilt to me with her own, they have hitherto been prevented from acting in concert."

The objects which it is desirable to accomplish are 1st To prevent the present circulation and future publication of the Memoir.

For this a threat of legal proceedings might be efficacious.

*He perhaps knows that the very annunciation of legal proceedings against him might occasion evidence to be offered to me from quarters of which I am at present ignorant. . . . The remotest idea of being summoned to England by any Court of Law would deprive him of that audacity which arises from the security of a foreign residence. . . . 2ndly The second object is—acting upon right principles, to act as will be most generally approved, in any event. . . .²

I have to ask—would not a communication to Lord B. from my father—authorised by me—answer the desired ends without being liable to the same objection as a letter from myself?—

The chief points in that communication to be—The information of my declining to peruse the MS—A representation of the injurious consequences of its circulation to Ada³—and a declaration that I shall consider the existence of such a Memoir (avowedly destined for future publication), especially if it be circulated in MS—at present, as releasing me from even the shadow of an engagement to suppress the facts of my own experience, or the corroborating proofs of Lord B's character and conduct—that reluctant as I have ever been to bring my domestic concerns before the public, and anxious as I have felt to *save from ruin a near connection of his*, I shall feel myself compelled by duties of primary importance, if he perseveres in accumulating injuries upon me, to make a disclosure of the past in the *most authentic* form.

Colonel Doyle had replied to this that, if Mrs Leigh were not to

¹ Lady Byron's underlining. The letter, dated 29th Jan. 1820, is in the Lovelace Papers.

² The passage between asterisks is omitted from the extensive quotation of this letter in Lovelace's *Astarte*.

³ The Hon. Augusta Ada Byron, only child of the marriage.

The Burning of Byron's Memoirs

be brought in, Lady Byron had better send "a letter from y^rself short and to the point . . . without any unnecessary provocation . . . the threat of a third person may make it incumbent upon him to revolt. . . ." ¹

He had reiterated the proposal in detail a few days later, ² explaining that he himself would not care to be the intermediary because, as he stood in no authorised relation to her, there might be "insinuations." Dr Lushington was not open to this objection, being her known legal adviser, but his intervention would have to be made through Byron's appointed representative, Kinnaird, "a very wrong-headed man," who was assumed—quite without foundation—to be "goading Ld. B. to the course of publicity." There was really nothing for it but an answer ostensibly from herself "affording no handle for reply."

It was composed by Dr Lushington, a curt note, which has often been published over Lady Byron's signature, ending with a brief menace about "consequences" if the book should be published—to which Byron was able to retort that this mysterious threat could be of little avail since, when it was carried out, he would be "where nothing can touch him further."

Lady Byron's friends were not a whit less devoted than her husband's and were honoured with even more significant confidences: though unlike Byron, whose lack of reserve was obvious, she had a most discreet and guarded manner and gave the impression each time she offered revelations that they were wrung from her in spite of herself, and so she carried to her listeners the same conviction she always felt herself that she was pursuing a "policy of silence." By the time of Byron's death, there was a very substantial muster of people who had heard from her own lips the dreadful records of her year of married life, and who thought it grossly unfair for the other party to have left any reminiscences of his own on this topic.

Among these ardent supporters were Vice-Admiral Sir William Hope of the Admiralty Board and his wife, Lady Athlone, who still kept that title by reason of having first been married to the Earl.

¹ Letter of 1st Feb. 1820.

² In a letter of 3rd Feb. 1820.

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Sir William lost no time in applying himself to the urgent question—would Lady Byron's representatives agree to repay John Murray the money Moore had been given for the *Memoirs* if they were handed over for burning? He had every reason to be optimistic because he had been informed by an Admiralty Secretary, John Barrow, who was familiar at Albemarle Street, that Murray was full of readiness to co-operate with any members of Byron's family who might wish to destroy his *Memoirs*, and it could not be doubted that the money to reimburse him would be raised, for Lady Byron was rich.

Accordingly, two days after Byron's death became known, Sir William called on her solicitor, G. B. Wharton, and not finding him at home, dashed off a letter to him:

Admiralty
Sunday Mornng
16 May 1824

My Dear Sir,

Having a most sincere esteem for Lady Byron, and considering how much she has already suffered, it would be a most cruel & lamentable circumstance, was She to undergo any further mortifications.

It is to endeavour to prevent this happening, that I now commit to Paper a conversation I had this morning with Mr Barrow one of our Secretaries. . . .

You are aware, I believe, that the late Lord Byron wrote a life of himself & entrusted the Manuscript to Mr Moore, under the injunction that it was not to be Published in his lifetime. In consequence of Pecuniary difficulties, this manuscript Mr Moore disposed of (I think most fortunately) to Mr Murray the Bookseller under the same injunction as to publication—that period having arrived, Mr Murray naturally looked at it, but he found [it] written in language so horrid & disgusting, that he felt as a man of honour would do, & and has *refused* the £2000 guineas [sic] he gave fort it, [sic] from another in the Trade who at Mr Moore's request wanted to get it back, & yesterday he came to Mr Barrow to state the circumstance, & to know if he could recommend him to any Relation of the Family to whom he might communicate these circumstances. Mr Barrow did not happen to know any person but Mr Wilmot Horton, to whom he recommended him to you. [sic] As I have not heard what has passed in that quarter, I am most desirous to give you this early

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information, and to conjure you not to lose one moment in seeing Mr Murray, for from what Mr Barrow told me, I am sure it would drive to distraction the amiable Lady B. was this [*? unloosed*] to the Publick in Print—Mr Murray said to Mr Barrow, that he wanted *no Profit*, & would give back (to be burnt I hope) this abominable manuscript to the Relations of the family upon being re-imbursed what he had advanced. . . .

I shall either write to, or see Mr Barrow, to ask him to advise Mr Murray to Keep quiet untill he sees you.

Ever yours truly
Wm Johnstone Hope.

Besides the errors that may be attributed to haste, there are other curious features here not so easily accounted for. John Murray himself consistently disclaimed having read the Memoirs. How then can he have found their language "horrid and disgusting"? He was well acquainted with Byron's family and had corresponded with Lady Byron since the Separation. Why should he apply to John Barrow, a stranger to all concerned, for a recommendation to one of the relatives? Why seek Barrow's introduction to Wilmot Horton whom he already knew? Yet, if these were deliberate misrepresentations, Lady Byron's lawyer was hardly the person to address them to, and we must conclude that the statements were made in good faith.

John Barrow is nowhere mentioned in the "*Narrative of the circumstances preceding the destruction of the Memoirs of Lord Byron as far as Mr Wilmot Horton was cognizant of that transaction*," composed within a fortnight by Wilmot Horton; but that he was very busy behind the scenes is evident from the lines to John Murray dated the same Sunday:

I enclose you a note from Sir William Hope, who is exceedingly interested in what concerns Lady Byron; and I have ventured to assure him that you will take no step hastily, and I have reason to believe that you have no other object than that of being indemnified for the money you gave for the manuscript. It would be well got rid of, if he would take it off your hands and consign it to the flames.¹

¹ Smiles, *Memoir of John Murray*, Chapter XVII.

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Before the morning was out he had also sent off a reassurance to the Admiralty :

My dear Sir William :

I have laid an injunction on Murray who, if I know him at all, will be ready to do what is right and what I advise him ; and I am sure he wishes for nothing more than sheer indemnification for the Sum which he gave to Mr Moore, which I believe was 2000 Guineas. I entirely agree with you that so infamous a document ought never to see the light except that of the fire, and that 2000 Guineas would be a cheap purchase in comparison to the pain and anguish the publication of it might inflict on poor Lady Byron and her friends.

I am, my dear Sir William
very faithfully yours
John Barrow

These letters make it very hard to see who was taking the initiative in getting Byron's work destroyed. The suggestion of burning it certainly seems to have originated with Sir William Hope, if we judge from Barrow's phrase "I entirely agree with you" : but the Horton Narrative and Hobhouse's Journal show that, with or without Barrow's influence, Murray was taking steps the day before any of the correspondence last quoted was in existence.

Mr Murray called on Mr Wilmot Horton on Saturday the 15th Inst. and for the 1st time informed him that he had the memoirs of Lord Byron in his possession. He stated . . . that he had strong reason to believe, although he had never read them himself, that they were entirely unfit for publication—that he well knew the curiosity that would exist in the world on the subject, and that consequently as far as his pecuniary interest was concerned, he should probably gain much more than he had given for them either by publishing or disposing of them,—but that he was perfectly willing to place them in the hands of Lord Byron's family without conditions. Mr Wilmot Horton stated in reply, that he was taken entirely by surprise with respect to this communication—that he had no authority to act for the family of Lord Byron,—but that he had no hesitation in pledging himself to Mr Murray that he should be indemnified for the Memoirs in question, upon placing them in the hands of the family of Lord Byron, and he requested Mr Murray on no account to suffer these memoirs to leave his possession, until after further

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communication with him, with which arrangement Mr Murray expressed himself entirely satisfied.¹

Wilmot Horton could not have believed for an instant that Augusta Leigh, notoriously impecunious, was in a position to pay two thousand guineas to secure the papers. It was not, therefore, of her he was thinking when he pledged himself on behalf of the family, but of Lady Byron. The decision must nevertheless appear to be Augusta's.

She was a cousin of his, and he sometimes acted as her spokesman on those occasions when, according to the code of the day, it was unseemly for a woman to speak for herself. Normally this role was filled by a father, brother, or husband, but Augusta's father, Captain Jack Byron, had long been dead, her surviving half-brothers, the Duke of Leeds and Lord Francis Godolphin Osborne, generally kept out of Byron entanglements, and her husband, Colonel Leigh, was an idle and feckless gentleman who lived for horse-racing and no one ever expected him to show the slightest capacity for anything else.

Wilmot and his wife (they had recently added Horton to their name on account of an inheritance) had been close friends of Augusta's and she trusted them still, so far as she dared trust anybody, but unknown to her they had been privy since the break-up of the marriage to all that Lady Byron could tell them of her guilt and depravity, so they were not really well-disposed. Like Augusta's still more intimate friends, Thérèse Villiers and her husband, they were tacitly allies of Lady Byron's. It was felt that Augusta never could show adequate remorse, never could abase herself enough to Lady Byron for not having denounced her publicly, and although she had done penances without number and abased herself to an extent that now makes profoundly uncomfortable reading, there was one gesture of submission she had refused to offer. With something almost like pride, almost like firmness, she had maintained, when several years ago her brother had been expected to visit England, that she could not bring herself absolutely to shut her doors to him. This recalcitrance had not been forgiven.

The necessity of preventing any autobiographical writing of Byron's

¹ Horton Narrative: Lovelace Papers and British museum.

from reaching the public might be supposed by Wilmot Horton to be a matter in which he could serve both ladies equally. Neither could wish the scandalous chronicle to circulate. Augusta was free from any fear that her brother would have betrayed her,¹ but it was very plain that if he had written objectionably about his wife, the repercussions would be painful. Then there was the fact that Byron, always daring, had been more prone than ever in recent years to write blasphemies and indecencies. Besides *Don Juan* and the deplorable *Cain*, there was a case *pendente lite* at this very moment against the rash publisher of *A Vision of Judgement*, indicted as a seditious libel.

Augusta had rooms in St James's Palace and a place at court with emoluments she could not afford to renounce. She was not a brave or strong-minded woman, and that she yielded to the various pressures that were brought to bear on her needs no recondite explanation.

A letter asking for the advice of her firmer, more self-reliant sister-in-law provides with the sharpness almost of caricature a picture of the writer—her confusion, weakness, silliness, prejudice, and the dangerous good nature which showed itself in a too ready desire to please and to placate. Though it is long and some of its points must be clarified later, it will bear only the minimum of abridgement :

Sunday Night

My dearest A—I know that you will forgive me for inflicting my perplexities upon you—& I feel most particularly anxious that you should know them from myself—on Friday—during my first interview with Mr Hobhouse—he expressed that *now* his first wish was the protect My poor Brother's *fame* & then alluded to the *Memoirs* as a subject of anxiety— I asked *who* had them he replied Moore— & told the story of a long squabble between Moore and Murray about them—which I really could not from nervousness comprehend—however it ended in his being *glad Moore had* them, I sorry Murray had them *not*—having of one a good opinion & the other quite the contrary— H— proceeded to say he did not know what to do—but must try to work on Moore's feelings abt them, in which he appeared to think his Success doubtful— Yesterday he came— said he had something to tell I should be glad to hear—that *it was*

¹ To the Hon. Mrs Villiers, the 11th Nov. 1818, Lady Byron wrote : " I had an intimation through Augusta that he was writing his life for publication, and she did not seem alarmed ! " Lovelace : *Lady Noel Byron and the Leighs*.

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agreed—(& he produced a *written paper* with ye agreement stated in it) that Moore Murray Hobhouse & Wilmot Horton sd come *here*—Murray receive 2000 G from Moore & place them the Memoirs in Moores hand who wd resign them into Mine—“& I advise you Mrs L to burn them in our presence[”]— I started & said, but is Moore to lose £2000 ! who can make that up to him—upon which H flew into a fit of *vehemence* & never could I understand anything but that I must be a Great fool for *Not* instantly Seizing his Meaning—so I pretended I did—& said *very well*—but have you heard from Mr Wilmot that he *will* come—upon which I understood him to know it—he was to attend on your part—this arrangement was repeated in my presence to G[eorge] B[yrone] who probably may have told you of it—with ye addition of a suggestion that *he* might also be present—and that D Kinnaird had or wd advance the Money for Moore—when alone with George I exclaimed, “*what can I do ?*” for you may imagine my dearest A the horrid task assigned me much as I agree in the expediency of the destruction of this or any thing that may be a disgrace to poor Bs memory—G B comforted me by Saying “*oh never mind you must be only glad they will be burnt*” & so My Dear A I thought I must perform this painful duty—with ye sort of feeling I should have if I were doomed to appear in a Court of Justice or something absolutely Necessary—

Today Hobhouse called & said, it is settled—that Moore Murray, Col Doyle & myself are to be here at 12 tomorrow for the purpose *above mentioned*—I must tell you tho, that during Hs visit yesterday he received a note from Murray, to propose Col Doyle instead of Wilmot—

. . . Wilmot is just gone—having been *extremely* kind & good natured & all that was amiable—but in ye first place he stated that Col Doyle had never heard *one word* of the arrangement !!! & in the next that he (W) felt that, if it was made I ought to appoint a person to act for me—instead of the thing being transacted here—in which God knows I most perfectly agree—for I wd rather do any thing almost than see any one of the 3 still unseen parties or take any share in the business— W. proposed acting for me—but I told him honestly that I knew there was that sort of feeling of H[obhouse] &c towards *him*, which wd or might probably revive now so as to occasion a *squabble* which wd be horrible to me—and injurious to the cause—and therefore he said why not leave it to Col Doyle ?—I told him I had no objection—but I must tell you that after trying in vain for I do not know how long to discuss what could have induced the Ms [Moore and Murray] to act such a double part—I found that

Doris Langley Moore

Moore thought if he could but publish the *unexceptionable* parts of the Memoirs—he should make 3000 instead of 2000 !!! upon which I said to Wilmot, then pray let the matter rest for ye moment, as to ye destruction of the Memoirs & arrange their safe deposit as you best can—but as you say & I understand Mr Moore says he will only resign them into My hands—if, at a proper time I am allowed *any voice* in the affair—to which I do not pretend to have any right or claim)—but if I have, I am most *irrevocably* determined that not one single line or word shall ever be published, or not be burnt—and I only wish I had 3000 Gs to give Moore for them at this moment . . .

I don't know whether you agree with me dearest A—but there is something to me of *Vanity & Egotism* in writing *one's own life* which I cannot bear—and there is quite sufficient known by those who may wish to do so, & can do it well, to answer their purpose without this unfortunate Memoir having to be read & canvassed & squabbled over, for what *one* may think desirable another not so—so here I am—God knows what will happen tomorrow at 12—for there must be some very mysterious proceedings, which must be explained by H—I am quaking, for I am not to say *I've seen W &c*—or allude to him, in short I do dislike having to fabricate or conceal— Perhaps you can give Me yr opinion by G B — . . . don't plague yr self to write without he sd be gone—a line—just to say My dearest A, what you think—of course I could not but suppose Col D had your *instructions or consent* to act for you—to this moment I cannot understand it at all. You will forgive me I know—I am most anxious to know how you are, which I hope to do from George B tomorrow—I am as well as it is possible in my present circumstances—ye elder children better ye younger fallen sick— God bless you Dearest A¹

The mention of a “double part” acted by Moore and Murray relates to a proposal by Moore, apparently endorsed in some tentative way by Murray, that instead of being destroyed the manuscript might be left in Augusta's keeping. The reference to this in her letter to Lady Byron is omitted because the matter is dealt with more directly in a protest dispatched by her on the same day, that busy Sunday of notes and messengers, to Wilmot Horton. (It was he who had conveyed to her in two successive letters the willingness of Moore and Murray to agree to this expedient.)

Mr Hobhouse has this moment left me, having informed me that

¹ Lovelace Papers.

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it was decided that Mr Moore, Mr Murray, Col. Doyle and yourself were to be *here at 12 o'clock to-morrow*—for the purpose of Mr Moore paying Mr Murray the money for the Memoirs, their being delivered into Mr Moore's hands and then into mine and from thence into the fire—the *time* has been settled today—every other part of the intention was *told me yesterday* by Mr Hobhouse. . . . I have been making up my mind ever since to perform what *ought* to be done, and was (as I before said) a few minutes ago informed by Hobhouse of *tomorrow* at 12 being the time—I am more surprised after this—than I can express to hear of Mr Murray *sending to you &c &c &c, still more than all—that I had expressed a wish to have these Memoirs in my possession !* I declare most solemnly that I never did anything of the sort— . . .

I know not what to think or do in this complicated business—it is my *very* decided opinion the Memoirs *ought* to be *burnt* and I think the sooner the better. . . .¹

Augusta had become fanatically obstinate, in the manner of weak-willed persons when they have been worked upon to take some unwontedly vigorous step.² It may not be insignificant that George Byron, who fortified her in her resolution to demolish Byron's records, was another recipient of Lady Byron's confidence, and had, like Colonel Doyle, seen her the day before at Beckenham, and was about to go back there.

Doyle was later to deny that he had any previous knowledge of an intention to burn the manuscript, and to profess that the whole affair had taken him by surprise ; and Augusta's long letter confirms that he was not a party to the making of the plan. Yet he must have had more knowledge of what was to happen than he afterwards admitted, else Hobhouse was taking a great deal for granted in writing to Murray on the eve of the prearranged ceremony of destruction :

Mr Moore will be ready with the money at twelve o'clock tomorrow and will meet you at that hour at Mrs Leigh's rooms. Colonel Doyle will, of course, be with you.

You will be good enough to bring all the papers—i.e. the MS and the copy of it made under Mr Moore's eye—the assignment and the bond.³

¹ Lovelace : *Lady Noel Byron and the Leighs*.

² Hobhouse, in his unpublished journal entry for May 15, says that when he told her of the proposed destruction of the memoirs, "she did not at first understand it."

³ Murray MSS.

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Murray was under the impression that, so far from having stood aloof from the proceedings, Doyle had already offered him whatever he had paid for the *Memoirs* to hand them over.¹

Here is Doyle's own declaration to Horton a year later :

Lady Byron told me at Beckenham, I think the day before, that she had received some communication from Mr Hobhouse on the subject of the manuscript—to the effect, as well as I recollect that Mr Moore was disposed to deliver it up to Lord Byron's family, and that it was very desirable to obtain it from him, and Lady Byron then requested me to act for her, in the event of its being necessary for her to do anything in the matter. I came to town immediately afterwards, but certainly without any *expectation* that I should be called upon to take any steps in the business till I had heard further from her. . . . My going afterwards to Murray's was quite accidental—you called upon me and requested me to accompany you there, which I did. . . . Lady Byron certainly gave no consent to the *destruction* of the manuscript either directly or indirectly—she never could have known that it was intended to destroy it, because I believe that intention was communicated for the first time at the meeting in question.²

Doyle's strand in the tangled and knotted skein of responsibility will be seen again less dimly.

During these conferences and letter-writings, Thomas Moore had not been forgotten. Hobhouse, believing the *Memoirs* were under Moore's control, had hurried to get him to an interview at Kinnaird's house in Pall Mall in order, as he told Augusta, "to work on his feelings," and this he did so successfully that Moore signed a paper, drawn up by Kinnaird, promising to surrender Byron's gift to Augusta and let her do what she would with it—which meant, as he was well aware, what Hobhouse had decided she should do.

To understand the probable reason for Moore's assent to Hobhouse's astounding proposition, we must glance backward to early November 1821, when he learned that two great bulwarks of his social life, Lord Lansdowne and Lord Holland, were united in disliking his transaction with Murray. Lord and Lady Holland had both been allowed to read the book and had found some comment adverse to Lady Holland in it, and that was what set off the unfortunate train of

¹ Letter to *The Academy*, 29th Sept. 1869.

² Lovelace's *Astarte*.

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Moore's misgivings. The disapproval of noblemen, and particularly of these, to whom he was under many obligations, was unendurable to him, and he had soon begun negotiating with Murray for a new contract that would enable him to regain possession of the scripts.

In order to induce John Murray to turn what amounted to an outright purchase into a loan on security, Moore seems to have represented to him, misleadingly, that Byron was having second thoughts about future publication, Murray being much more likely to do a remarkably obliging thing for Byron than for Moore. What Murray believed may be given in his own words :

... In November, 1821, a joint assignment of the Memoirs was made to me by Lord Byron and Mr Moore, with all legal technicalities, in consideration of a sum of 2000 guineas. . . . Some months after the execution of this assignment, Mr Moore requested me, as a great personal favour to himself and Lord Byron, to enter into a second agreement, by which I should resign the absolute property which I had in the Memoirs, and give Mr Moore and Lord Byron, or any of their friends, a power of redemption *during the life of Lord Byron*. As the reason pressed upon me for this change was that their friends thought there were some things in the Memoirs that might be injurious to both, I did not hesitate to make this alteration at Mr Moore's request ; and accordingly, on the 6th day of May, 1822, a second deed was executed, stating that, "Whereas Lord Byron and Mr Moore are now inclined to wish the said work not to be published, it is agreed that, if either of them shall, *during the life of the said Lord Byron*, repay the 2000 guineas to Mr Murray, the latter shall redeliver the Memoirs." . . .¹

It is possibly this attestation which had led several biographers to state that, about the time of his mother-in-law's death, Byron began to vacillate and, hoping for reconciliation with his wife, to wish he could reclaim what he had written about her. A number of entries in Moore's Journal place it beyond doubt that he was resolved to ask for the new contract many weeks before January 1822, when Lady Noel died, and at a time when Byron himself was vigorously defending—as will presently appear—Moore's right to profit by the Memoirs and his own to have them posthumously published. Nor has anything ever come to light in his correspondence to indicate either that he

¹ Letter to R. Wilmot Horton, 19th May 1824, quoted by Smiles.

regretted what he called his anticipated legacy to Moore or that he still had hopes of a reconciliation with his wife.

The only friends of Byron's who had been actively worrying about the bargain were Holland and Hobhouse, not disinterested parties, and Douglas Kinnaird, who read the *Memoirs* without turning a hair but took strong exception to the original contract—the one by which “Mr Moore sold his Lordship to the booksellers”—and who belonged to the anti-Moore faction of Byron's friends. In his capacity of Power of Attorney he had helped to deal with the revision of the terms, and this is another point to be borne in mind when the names of Moore and Byron are found bracketed together in a supposed intention not to publish the manuscripts. Kinnaird, a crony of Hobhouse's, had not liked Byron's renunciation of control. For that reason, he had from the first lingered and made difficulties about handing over to Murray the assignment with Byron's signature.

Having demonstrated his anxiety to appease his exalted advisers, Moore had not the means to do anything further. The redemption of the pledge needed a large sum even measured by the standards prevailing today when the pound has diminished to less than a fifth of the value it then had. He had gone through the motions of doing what the two great lords thought proper, and his inability, after all the fuss he had made, to complete the act of repurchase must have seemed humiliating when he was confronted by Hobhouse and Kinnaird whose disapprobation was patent.

Moore's most persistent foibles were snobbery and the kind of defensive pride that is found chiefly in men who lack security. An Irishman in an epoch when the Irish were still an oppressed people, a grocer's son who had magically won a foothold in the world where birth was usually indispensable to acceptance, his position was rendered still more vulnerable by his being poor—dismally poor compared with Hobhouse, a bachelor free from family cares, whose father was an affluent and indulgent baronet, or Kinnaird, a peer's son with a partnership in a banking business. In consequence, he seemed obliged, the subject of money being raised, to make desperate gestures.

He had exposed all his weakness when, after his futile decision to reclaim the book, he had written in his *Journal* :

This is, I feel, over-delicate deference to the opinions of others ;

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but it is better than allowing a shadow of suspicion to approach within a mile of one in any transaction. . . .¹

"Over-delicate deference" must have been uppermost again when friends of Byron's who were gentlemen by birth informed him what he, as a gentleman himself, ought to do now that Byron was dead. His assent was half-hearted but it was not withheld.

He afterwards announced in the *Morning Chronicle* that he had "placed the manuscript at the disposal of Lord Byron's sister, Mrs Leigh, with the sole reservation of a protest against its *total* destruction—at least without previous perusal and consultation among the parties."² Hobhouse angrily challenged the existence of the reservation, and since Moore signed the paper it is manifest that he could not have made it with sufficient force; but that he did at least attempt to make it is borne out by another entry in his Journal showing he had put forward arguments that to burn "without any previous perusal or deliberation . . . would be throwing a stigma upon the work which it did not deserve." He had also told Wilmot Horton how great an injustice they would do to Byron's memory "to condemn the work wholly and without even opening it, as if it were a pest bag."³

Nevertheless he had somehow been brought to concede the foolish promise. When such words as "sacrifice" and "honourable feeling" were the favoured currency, Moore had never let himself be outdone by anyone.

But within hours, or less, he realised that he had gone too far and determined to retract. It is most ironical that he afterwards had to take almost the whole weight of public blame, because in reality his efforts to save the book were strenuous. Besides persuading Longmans, his publisher, to lend him money to buy the property back, and notifying John Murray of his intention, he managed within twenty-four hours to interview Samuel Rogers, Henry Brougham, Lord Lansdowne, and Henry Luttrell, all of whom were agreed that total destruction was uncalled for. Luttrell and perhaps Rogers, had some knowledge of the contents of the alarming manuscript.

¹ Moore: *Memoirs*, April 1822.

² Letter dated 26th May 1824.

³ Moore: *Memoirs*, May 1824.

They were both well acquainted with Byron and might be supposed to have his reputation at heart. Brougham on the other hand had been consulted on Lady Byron's behalf in the Separation, which must have seemed a good reason for hearing his counsels.

Then there were Doyle, acting for Lady Byron, and Horton vaguely supposed to represent Mrs Leigh. He succeeded in seeing them both, and after a Saturday and Sunday spent in weighty colloquies, he was able to write Hobhouse to the effect that these respectable men had concurred in a "modification" of the irrevocable course first proposed.

They had reached the conclusion that all parties should together "peruse and examine" the reminiscences and eliminate what was objectionable, "rejecting all that could wound the feelings of a single individual but preserving what was innoxious and creditable to Lord Byron. . . ." ¹

It was not a very satisfactory solution, but seen in perspective it had this merit—it would have given rise to such complicated and lingering disputes that time would have been gained for the outbreak of gentlemanly hysteria to subside. But Hobhouse, on receiving Moore's note on Monday morning, was resolved not to be overborne, and set forth without even breakfasting² to remonstrate with the most accessible of his opponents, Henry Luttrell, whom he had known for years, and who like himself lived in Albany Court.

On his way to Luttrell's chambers, he happened to meet Moore and, full of righteous anger, told him that "if the matter were ever publicly discussed, he must say what he thought of the whole transaction." By playing fast and loose with his promise, Moore had increased the embarrassment of his situation, but he was nerved up now to make a stand.

The hour appointed for the final conference was almost at hand, and at Moore's request Luttrell was invited to attend it. The engagement to meet at Augusta's had been altered, and they foregathered in Hobhouse's Albany rooms. Presently John Murray was announced, resolute for doing away with a sensationally interesting unpublished book as, almost certainly, no publisher in history has ever been before or since. So shocked was he when he heard Moore reiterate his

¹ Moore: *Memoirs*, May 1824.

² Hobhouse: *Unpublished Journal*.

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suggestion for keeping at least part of the work that having "sat down, and in a very determined voice and manner protested that the MSS should be burnt forthwith," he launched into a speech of sheer heroics, which Hobhouse approvingly noted thus :

I do not care whose the MSS are ; here am I, as a tradesman ; I do not care a farthing about having your money, or whether I ever get it or not ; but such regard have I for Lord Byron's fame and honour that I am willing and am determined to destroy these MSS which have been read by Mr Gifford, who says they would be damaging to Lord Byron's name. It is very hard that I, as a tradesman, should be willing to make a sacrifice which you, as a gentleman, will not consent to.¹

This from a man who, two days before, had reminded Hobhouse that the sum due to him for redeeming the manuscript was not two thousand pounds, as written in the document Kinnaid had drawn up, but "two thousand guineas, with interest, and the collateral expenses of stamp, agreement, bond, etc." was decidedly impressive : but Moore for the moment held out, even when accused by Murray of acting "anything but like a man of honour." The tempers of Moore, Murray, and Hobhouse rose, while Luttrell, with a sanity which must have been almost comical where the prevailing tone was altogether quixotic, "now and then put in a word, saying he could see no harm in reading the MSS."

Mr Hobhouse insisted very strongly on the impropriety of such a proceeding. Mr Moore said that both Mr Wilmot Horton and Colonel Doyle, friends of Lady Byron and of Lord Byron's family, saw no objection to the perusal of the Memoirs. Mr Hobhouse remarked that he could hardly bring himself to believe that ; and Mr Murray stated that those two gentlemen themselves were at this moment waiting at his house, in order to be present at the destruction of the Memoirs.

On hearing this, this whole party left Mr Hobhouse's rooms, and proceeded to Mr Murray's house in Albemarle Street.²

The six people who now met in the famous drawing-room which had witnessed so many pleasanter gatherings fell by a natural division

¹ Hobhouse's *Narrative*.

² *Ibid.* Hobhouse's *Narrative* is written throughout in the third person.

into three pairs—Hobhouse and Murray, hot for destruction ; Moore and Luttrell, who alone in that group knew what the book contained, anxious for at least its partial preservation ; Horton and Doyle, swayed by Moore's powerful arguments of the day before, yet on the whole favouring the solution that would appeal to Lady Byron.

Kinnaird and Burdett were not present, Kinnaird having been obliged to leave for Scotland, while Burdett's official connection with Byron's affairs had ended after a financial settlement in which he had acted as arbitrator. (It is true that Hobhouse was as yet uncertain that the will by which he had been made executor had not been superseded by a later one, but it would have needed a bold man to dispute his claim to concern himself with a matter touching the after-fame of so very close a friend.)

What took place now was a full-scale altercation, Murray protesting that Moore was not legally entitled to recover the book, the Agreement for which however could not be found ; Hobhouse pressing the wishes of Mrs Leigh, and Moore so ill-judging as to oppose him with the wishes of Byron. There was nothing better calculated to irritate a man who felt that he owned a proprietary right in Byron—who had conferred with him about his writings since their undergraduate days, interviewed his publisher, corrected his proofs, and brought out a substantial volume of notes to one of his works. To be told of Byron's wishes on a matter both literary and personal by one whom he despised must have been an infusion of wormwood into the cup of his grief—a grief much deeper than the inveterately superficial Moore was capable of feeling.

He was provoked to retort with what he had already said in private to Augusta—that Byron's wishes had changed : at their last meeting in September 1822, he had expressed uneasiness about his gift, and had only been restrained by delicacy towards Moore from recalling it.¹

Moore did not believe him, and the conflict reached a degree of

¹ It should be observed that this was several months after the period of his supposed vacillations, which had been used by Moore as a pretext for securing a new contract. In his Journal Moore invariably uses the first person singular for recording the negotiations : e.g. . . . "at the time [April 1822] when I converted the sale of the 'Memoirs' into a debt," or "Determined . . . to throw myself on the mercy of Murray and prevail on him to rescind the deed."

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bitterness that nearly led to a challenge. Even at the last moment, when the manuscript with the only copy that existed of it had been brought into the room and was about to be torn up and thrown into the flames, he "still continued his remonstrances, saying: '*Remember I protest against the burning as contradictory to Lord Byron's wishes and unjust to me.*'"¹

By now a seventh person had joined the company, a boy sixteen years old, John Murray's son, destined to be the third in the unbroken succession of John Murrays whose history as publishers begins in the mid-eighteenth century. He was introduced as the heir to the house, to share in what was recognised as a momentous proceeding. As a man of eighty he could still recall the violence of the quarrel between Moore and Hobhouse.

To put down the pretensions of Moore seems by this time to have become Hobhouse's sole—as I think it was from the first his strongest—motive, for, when his Narrative is on the threshold of its culminating point, we find casually dropped into it this most significant passage:

Some one then asked whether or not the end proposed might not be answered by depositing the manuscripts under seals in the hands of some banker, in order to compare them with any spurious copy of the Memoirs which might afterwards appear. Mr Hobhouse said he could see no objection to this proposal if Mrs Leigh consented, but the proposal was overruled.

"Mr Hobhouse could see no objection". . . . Then he was not opposed on principle to the preservation of his friend's recollections, but merely, it would appear, determined that they should not be under the jurisdiction of Moore.

The person who ventured by far the soundest idea that had yet been put forward was Wilmot Horton; and as Hobhouse was willing that they should pause and refer the suggestion back to Mrs Leigh, we are left with John Murray and Colonel Doyle as the only possible advocates of instant burning—Luttrell having been from the first on the side of Moore.

If we accept the account contained in his recently quoted letter,

¹ Hobhouse's *Narrative*. His own italics.

Doyle may be ruled out. "I regarded myself," he informed Horton. "only as a witness and not as a party to the proceeding."

Persuaded as he was that his conduct had been meritorious, John Murray would not have been at pains to deny that the last word was with him; but for one who regarded himself only as a witness, Colonel Doyle's behaviour was curious. Hobhouse reports it thus:

Colonel Doyle then said to Mr Moore "*I understand then that you stand to your original proposal to put the MSS at Mrs Leigh's absolute disposal.*" Mr Moore replied, "*I do but with the former protestation.*" "*Well then*" said Colonel Doyle, "*on the part of Mrs Leigh, I put them into the fire.*" Accordingly Mr Wilmot Horton and Colonel Doyle tore up the Memoirs and a copy of them, and burnt them.¹

Colonel Doyle's intervention "on the part of Mrs Leigh" was unwarrantable seeing that he was only, according to his own claim, holding a watching brief for Lady Byron. Though his subsequent denial of being given any definite instructions by her may have been true, it is straining credulity rather far to imagine their having the discussion which sent him hurrying to London, after she had received Hobhouse's urgent letter, without her once uttering an idea as to what the fate of the Memoirs ought to be. She had made her desire to prevent their circulation quite explicit in 1820, and must, one would suppose, have hinted an opinion in 1824. The expressions of satisfaction she wrote to at least two correspondents on hearing what had been done prove, at any rate, that Doyle was serving her loyally by putting the most drastic of all ends to the argument.

The pages blazed, pages by the hand that had written *Don Juan*, and also some of the finest prose of his century. Evidently under the impression that the holocaust was some sort of ritual, Wilmot Horton handed a batch of the papers to Hobhouse so that he might take his turn in feeding the fire. He declined, saying that only those empowered by Mrs Leigh should do the work of destruction—a disingenuous excuse from the man who had said to her with so much emphasis: "*You must burn them.*"²

He was writer enough to have a glimmering, if there were a lucid

¹ Hobhouse's *Narrative*.

² The phrase is as she gives it in a letter to Lady Byron, 6th June 1825.

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interval in his fever, that what was being consumed was something of Byron. As the leaves, torn by the alien hands of Horton and Doyle, blackened and crumbled in the flames, the familiar handwriting must, for a moment at least, have reproached him. If so, his aching conscience served but to make him cruel. He seemed to take a pleasure in every discomfiture that Moore subsequently experienced ; and there were many.

The first, over and above the loss of the battle, was the arrival of a solicitor with a draft of the missing Agreement, which fully confirmed Murray's belief that, by neglecting to repay the loan during Byron's lifetime, Moore had totally forfeited his ownership of the Memoirs : after all the high words he was forced to confess lamely that his memory had erred, and that he had never properly read the documents.

Then came a crucial dilemma. Murray, as it turned out, had only burned his own property. He had had the satisfaction of making a grandiose speech declaring that he did not care about the money, and now he could do no less than support his words by refusing to have it repaid. Why should Moore, to whom the sum was much greater than it was to Murray, not take him at his word ? But pride compelled him to argue that, when he had consented to give up the Memoirs, he had looked upon them as his own.

Hobhouse not only led the chorus of disapprobation for Moore's vagueness in signing contracts without mastering their clauses, but implacably underlined in his Narrative Luttrell's reminder, interposed just when it looked as if Moore would consent to let Murray bear the loss : "*Recollect, Moore, you have had the money of Murray.*" Thus urged, there was no other course for one on the defensive but to become more persistent ; and Murray, in the customary manner of those who make fine speeches, had it both ways, gaining the credit of his magnanimous words while accepting back in full his two thousand guineas—with interest and the other little items he had mentioned.¹

¹ The extremely handsome terms on which he afterwards commissioned Moore's biography of Byron were in some sort a compensation, but the effects of Moore's foolish gesture had been felt for years before this solace was given, and Moore had to write a book instead of merely editing and expanding one.

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Still unsated, Hobhouse asked him before they dispersed to own "that Mr Murray had acted perfectly well and honourably in the business," to which Moore retorted, with a laugh that must have been rather a wry one, that he was like the Irishman who, when a judge enquired if he had anything to say why sentence of death should not be passed upon him, exclaimed: "Oh nothing, except that by Jasus you've settled it all very nicely amongst you."

Still Hobhouse would not let it go, but went on telling Moore in a jesting style that must have been unutterably galling, how much he had been in the wrong. That night he unkindly confided to his diary his sympathy with Burdett's remark that "Moore's conduct might be attributed to *poverty* and *vanity*." He meant that those disadvantages had actuated Moore in trying to save the Memoirs, but the reverse was really true. Poverty and vanity had deprived him of the courage to stand his ground when the world might suppose that in doing so he had a view of his financial interest.

Not that any degree of courage on his part could have averted the ultimate folly once it was proved that he was legally dispossessed: too many wheels had been set in motion. But the fact remains that he had consented—though protestingly—to what was done while he still believed he had the right to stop it. "The conclusion cannot be resisted," says his biographer, L. A. G. Strong, "that Moore failed his friend."

He was determined, however, not to make an admission so damaging either in public or in the privacy of his own meditations, and on the following day, the 18th May, restored to something like equanimity by a happy meeting with ladies of the Royal Family, he wrote an afterthought to his account of the scene at Albemarle Street, reminding himself how Hobhouse said Byron had ultimately regretted having given away the Memoirs. "This if I wanted any justification to myself for what I have done, would abundantly satisfy me as to the propriety of the sacrifice."¹

It was a spurious justification introduced as a mere postscript with the words, "I ought to have mentioned——" Had Byron's wishes been genuinely in his mind, they would not have been the last consideration he alluded to.

¹ Moore's *Memoirs*.

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That he was able to convince himself his motives had been such as he would have desired them to be, may be seen from his journal entry for the 15th December that year :

Called upon Hobhouse. . . . Told him (what I feel), that all that has happened since the destruction of the Memoirs convinces me that he was right in advising their total suppression, as, if the remainder were published, much more mischief would be imagined to have existed in the suppressed part than there is even now. Begged of him to give me some time or other under his hand, for my own satisfaction, *the assurance which had such weight with me in giving up the Memoirs*,¹ that Byron had expressed to him, when they last met, his regret at having put them out of his own power, and that it was only delicacy towards me that prevented him from recalling them ; said that I might depend upon it he would.

Hobhouse's corresponding entry for the same date ends thus :

He [Moore] told me that his conduct had been often attacked even by his friends, but that he silenced them by saying that Byron told me his wishes that the Memoirs should not be published. After some more talk on Byron, and his saying several times, 'You were much more his friend than I can pretend to have been,' he went away.

If only Hobhouse had been given that comforting assurance just seven months earlier, if only Moore had not been so assertive of his independence, Byron's autobiography might now have its place on our shelves besides Rousseau's *Confessions* : for what his heart, in the first throes of grief, revolted against (as his Journals unconsciously disclose) was that Moore should be enabled to advertise to the world an intimacy with Byron which might be thought to eclipse his own.

Was he lying when he produced that statement about Byron's regrets for the disposition he had made of the reminiscences ? Not, I think, literally. It is unlikely that, even in the crisis of a struggle in which his profoundest emotions were engaged, that most accurate-minded of men would fling his honesty wholly to the winds : but I believe this to be one of the instances in which he violated the spirit though not the letter of the truth.

He had repeatedly chided Byron for giving away the Memoirs, and Byron had shown an obstinate unrepentance, continuing to

¹ Author's italics.

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present Moore with new portions, and defending both Moore's right to pledge the manuscript to Murray, and his own to do as he pleased with it. On 23rd November 1821, he was declaring in reply to one of Hobhouse's protests:

With regard to "the Memoirs" I can only say that Moore acted entirely with *my approbation* in the whole transaction. . . . Do you really mean to say, that I have not as good a right to leave such an MS after my death as the thousands who have done the same? Is there no *reason* that I should? Will not my life (it is egotism—but you know this is true of all men who have *had* a name even if they survive it) be given in a false and unfair point of view by others? I mean false as to *praise*, as well as *censure*. If you have any *personal* feelings upon it, I can say, as far as I recollect, that you are mentioned without anything that could annoy you; and if otherwise it shall be cut out.

This is all I can do about them, or indeed am disposed to do.

The assurance that he might cut out anything personally annoying to him could have done little to mollify Hobhouse. Resentment at learning that Byron had put Moore in possession of so important a work without giving a glimpse of it to his closest friend could only be intensified by the announcement that it might possibly contain passages of a questionable kind about himself.

When the new Agreement was made confirming an arrangement with Murray by which Moore was to supply additional anecdotes and information after Byron's death, he was fatuous enough to send off a letter telling his friend that he would be accused of "purchasing a biographer under pretext of doing a generous action"—to which Byron replied amiably but conclusively that he thought he might have a biographer without purchase "since most scribblers have two or three gratis."

That was on 18th July 1822, nearly three years after Moore had had from him the first seventy-eight folio sheets of the text, those which included the "long and minute" description of his matrimonial troubles. In all that time he had not retracted, and on 8th August 1822, he was in fact toying (though Hobhouse was doubtless unaware of this) with the idea of publishing some of the book at once "to counteract"—and the word should be remembered—the slanders of

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one John Watkins who had printed his opinion that "the poet of lust" (Moore) had aptly received as a gift *Memoirs* by "the imitator of Juvenal."

Let me know what you think [Byron wrote to Moore] or whether I had better *not* :—at least, not the second part, which touches on the actual confines of still existing matters.

Less than five weeks later, Byron, according to Hobhouse, was voicing those regrets of which he had never given the smallest hint in all the preceding period. It can only be conjectured that if, during Hobhouse's visit to Pisa in September, Byron did lament having put the *Memoirs* out of his own control, it was because he had not found himself free to act as he pleased when he had had the impulse to publish. Whatever he said was not deemed significant enough at the time to be alluded to in Hobhouse's *Journal* of their conversations.

That Hobhouse used his memory disingenuously we may suspect from the single clumsy and evasive sentence in which his *Narrative* deals with the important matter of Byron's views :

Mr Hobhouse said, that his Lordship had, in 1822, expressed himself in connection as to the unfitness of making the use originally intended of the *Memoirs*.

Such words have not the positive ring of a truth that needs no loophole.

But even the most incontrovertible proof that Byron changed his mind about how and when the *Memoirs* were to be made public would not have been a justification for what was done with them, seeing that an intention to refrain from publishing a document is in no wise synonymous with an intention to destroy it, and neither Hobhouse, Moore, nor anyone who had known Byron was ever so dishonest as to pretend that he had wished to recall his pages for the purpose of reducing them to ashes. On the contrary, all his references to them in letters and reported conversations are in a style which cannot but lead us to believe that their existence was a source of considerable satisfaction to him.

On this score testimony has come to light by a witness whose romantic and flowery mode of expression should not obscure the

extremely valuable mass of first-hand evidence she has provided. This is the much under-estimated Countess Guiccioli, author of two books on Byron, one of which has not yet been published except in the form of extracts. Writing the second work, *La Vie de Lord Byron en Italie*, in her old age and when a most sanctimonious code of morals prevailed, she was obliged to keep up a fiction that her relations with Byron had been platonic, but apart from this almost compulsory hypocrisy, her story, wherever it can be checked, proves reliable.

She recalls that when Byron gave Moore the Memoirs—that is the first batch of them—at his villa on the Brenta in 1819, “he was beaming. His beautiful face seemed to say that he could resign himself to the injustice of the present in the certainty that these pages would one day do him justice, and that at the same time he was lightening the burden of a friend.” She goes on to comment with bitterness on the treacherous destruction of these writings, which, had they been allowed to survive, would have made materially impossible “the disgusting fable that has crossed the Atlantic,¹ because they contained down to the tiniest details what had passed between him and Lady Byron.”

At the date in question, Countess Guiccioli had not sufficient command of English to have read the Memoirs, but Byron must have given her some notion of their contents. “Down to the tiniest detail” tallies well with his own phrase about the description of his married life. She saw him constantly while he proceeded with the work, which he sent off to Moore in successive parcels, and she lived with him till his embarkation for Greece in July 1823. There is one sole point on which all observers are agreed, and that is that he was little disposed to concealment of his feelings: if he had repented of his memoir-writing, his daily companion would not have remained in ignorance of it.

We may securely conclude with her that he would never have sanctioned the irrevocable suppression of the life-story to which he

¹ Mrs Beecher Stowe's *True Story of Lady Byron*. The Memoirs certainly contained no anticipation of these disclosures. Lord John Russell, who read them, declared this plainly in a letter to Lord Wentworth, afterwards 2nd Earl of Lovelace, who had sent him a Digest of Lady Byron's Statements regarding the relations between Byron and Augusta.

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had so long applied himself, any more than he sanctioned the suppression of *Don Juan*, when a conclave of his friends pleaded with him not to print it.

That a group of responsible people should presume to destroy unread a major work by a man whom each of them held to be a genius may seem so strange as almost to defy credence. It is not surprising that the public assumed it was being protected (much against its will) from disclosures of surpassing wickedness; we only marvel that Hobhouse and Murray should completely have failed to see the immense injury they were inflicting on the name they wished to glorify—injury crystallised in the following extract from the *New Monthly Magazine*:¹

. . . It must be taken for granted that the Memoirs were utterly unfit for publication in any shape; and that Mr Moore and Lord Byron's other friends did not expurgate them only because they were incapable of expurgation.

The public were left unaware that, of the seven who saw Byron's recollections consigned to oblivion, only two had read them, and theirs the voices that were raised in protest. The conclusions drawn by his detractors were inevitable: but if my synthesis of the various first-hand accounts has thrown any light on motives, the fantastic act can now be explained without any such sinister imaginings.

To sum these motives up, Colonel Doyle acted in accordance with what he presumed, having interviewed her, would be the wishes of Lady Byron. Robert Horton was also eager to be of service to her, and though he wavered and put forward sensible alternative proposals, he was not disposed to press them. He was ostensibly under directions from Byron's nearest adult relative, and did not understand how completely *she* had been directed by Hobhouse.

Moore suffered the spoliation under duress because he was financially involved and dreaded in his vanity to be thought regardful of self-interest. Had it not been for his fatal snobbery, he might have played a part of real instead of meretricious honour, for he could see the points that Hobhouse and Murray had missed—the slur from which his friend's memory would never recover. Luttrell was present only

¹ May 1827.

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as a supporter of Moore. The position of these four participants, the willing and the unwilling, is not ambiguous.

Murray's was more complicated. We must take into consideration his hearty dislike of Byron's later works, and his having had such a deal of trouble over *Don Juan* and *Cain* that he may well have flinched from the prospect of bringing out anything more in, morally speaking, the same line. There was the report of Gifford, his trusted literary adviser, that the Memoirs were "fit only for a brothel" and possibly he had also been influenced by his lawyer, Sharon Turner, who was opposed to his publishing Byron.

To these factors must be added his deep distress at Byron's death and sincere desire to avert posthumous scandals, and the urgent representations of Lady Byron's partisans. Nor should we leave out of the account his natural aptitude for a striking gesture. He was taking a stand unique in the trade of bookselling, and the same daring which had inspired him, in 1820, to buy for a huge price a work which could not be published till a man of thirty-two had died, may have been exactly what brought him to the pitch of sacrificing it.

As for Hobhouse, he behaved as if he feared the explosion of grave secrets, but that is very unlikely, for he was well aware, and stated in his Journals, that many persons had already seen the manuscripts. Without any specific revelation in mind, he may well have dreaded indecency and a self-portrait in what Byron had described as "my finest, ferocious Caravaggio style"—a style that Hobhouse totally failed to appreciate. It might even be hazarded that, having been sharply rebuked for his efforts to demolish *Cain* and *Don Juan*, he was unconsciously resolved to demolish *something*. But no one who had studied Hobhouse's diaries and letters could doubt that, above all, he was impelled by an insensate desire for victory over Moore.

To have entrusted those pages to Moore with *carte blanche* to hand them round as he pleased and no stipulation that they should be shown to Hobhouse was one of the major follies of Byron's life. Hobhouse was unsympathetic at this period to most forms of biographical writing, but he was by no means addicted to the destruction of documents. As Byron's executor, it is actually what he kept when he had the opportunity of for ever expunging it that amazes us. The book his friend had written would have been heavily censored,

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or its publication delayed for many years, but ultimately, his possessiveness once deferred to, Hobhouse might have proved as vigorous in protecting that ill-fated testament as he was in ensuring its oblivion.

Within twenty-four hours of the burning, Lady Byron received several letters. There was one from her solicitor, Mr Wharton, who had seen Sir William Hope and Lady Athlone, and who reported that their envoy, John Barrow, had been in touch with Murray even before "Hobhouse & Co," so Murray's promise to give up the property was independent of Hobhouse's advocacy. But he gave full credit to Hobhouse and Kinnaird for their prompt and practical demolition arrangements:

... Its having been so done without your Interference was all that could be wished by you or your friends— In this both her Ladyship and Sir Wm heartily concurred and were most happy to learn the matter was so terminated.¹

Lady Byron replied in a brief note dated the 17th May: "I need only say that your communication has relieved my anxiety."²

Horton's announcement was not written till evening, but it arrived by nightfall because, being at the Colonial Office, he had special facilities.

Downing Street
Monday
¼ before 6

Dear Lady Byron

Do not be alarmed at my sending a *Messenger* over to you (to ease my own pocket at the expense of the Country) but I do so that your mind may be set at rest upon one point *before night*—Doyle & myself were at Mr Murrays by 11, & waited till 12 when I wrote the enclosed letter, which please to return—before I had left the Room however the parties arrived: Moore: Luttrell as his friend: Hobhouse: Doyle: W. Horton: & after *an hours* discussion which

¹ Lovelace Papers.

² Lest there should be any misinterpretation, in the light of recent theories, of the anxiety of Lady Byron and her friends to suppress the Memoirs, it is as well to explain that there was, according to Thomas Moore, only one 'objectionable' reminiscence in Byron's account of his married life. It is quoted by Leslie A. Marchand on p. 510 of the second volume of his *Byron*, and is of a normal and heterosexual character. It is perfectly natural that Lady Byron and her supporters would oppose the publication of the intimacies of her relations with her husband, and perhaps rumour had exaggerated the licence he had allowed himself.

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will not bear abridgements, both copies of the *Memoirs were burnt* in my presence. I will come over & breakfast with you at 10 on Wednesday, weather & work permitting—and would come over this Evening *if I could*. . . .

Augusta, of course, is very much satisfied at the destruction of the *Memoirs*. indeed, I am satisfied that it was the only thing to be done, though much remains to be considered respecting it. . . .

Believe me *always*

Your most faithful friend

R. W. Horton¹

The satisfaction felt by Augusta was, as Lady Byron and her friends apparently believed, because she rejoiced at the suppression of reminiscences which would be incriminating to herself, for they did not move in the fashionable set which had been privileged to read the work and could acquit the author of so disgusting a treachery. In the sub-acid correspondence which ensued, Augusta laid stress on having had no motive but the protection of her brother's name, and as to that she took the fullest responsibility—much more than her fair share of it.

Whatever might be said *whoever* might be mentioned in those *Memoirs*, the disgrace would have been *his*! He was not there to prevent or to direct—and I feel sure as of *My* existence that in his life time they never wd have seen light and have every reason to hope from the blessed alteration during the last year, he would have done his best, had he been spared to have prevented it after his death.²

Lady Byron's most explicit utterance to Augusta was slightly at odds with her swift expression of relief to her solicitor. It is contained in a letter of the 1st June 1825 :³

. . . I do concur *now* in the expediency and propriety of the destruction, but had the question been *then* submitted to me, they [the *Memoirs*] certainly would not have been consumed by *my* decision. It is therefore perhaps as well that it was not.

The reason why several pens were still preoccupied with the subject more than a year later was that the question was for ever being debated—who, if anyone, should repay Moore for his loss?

Lady Byron, who was liberal in money matters, offered £1000

¹ Lovelace Papers.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

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towards his reimbursement, and Augusta was for a time eager to provide the remainder, supposing herself to be lifted from financial embarrassment by inheriting as much of Byron's fortune as he was free to leave her. (The bulk of it was tied up in his marriage settlement.) But there were all kinds of hair-splittings as to how the sum should be received, whether directly from the family, or through Murray, or in some other manner. Moore, though longing for the cash, soon grew haughty again. Not knowing that Hobhouse had already advised against restitution, he was rash enough to ask his opinion, and Hobhouse took the chance of making one more thrust—though not by any means his last. His Narrative gives the conversation thus :

... Mr Moore said to Mr Hobhouse, "Now, tell me, if I had been a rich instead of a poor man, what would you have said?" After hesitating a little, Mr Hobhouse replied, "Do you wish me to speak exactly what I think?" "Certainly," said Mr Moore. "Then," replied Mr Hobhouse, "although if I were your enemy, I should be silent, yet as I am not, I will say that it is my opinion you should *not* take the money."

Mr Moore took Mr Hobhouse by the hand, and said : "There you spoke as a man of honour, and as a friend ; thank you a thousand times. I felt all along I could not take this money ; I am now sure I was right."

As it is always interesting to compare the descriptions of two good witnesses relating the same incident, and good witnesses are extremely rare among the chroniclers of Byron, I add Moore's version of the same dialogue, which took place on the 21st May 1824 :

... After a little more conversation [Hobhouse] looked earnestly at me and said, "Shall I tell you, Moore, fairly what I would do if I were in your situation?" "Out with it," I answered eagerly, well knowing what was coming, "I would *not* take the money," he replied ; and then added, "The fact is, if I wished to injure your character, my advice would be to accept it." This was an honest and manly triumph of good nature. ...

But many years were to pass before Hobhouse was to cease sniping in a peculiarly ill-natured manner at Moore. The next few days, during which the newspapers persisted in talking of the episode,

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were fraught with several occasions for disparagement. Though Moore had parted with a sum insanely beyond his means to pay for a measure which he had angrily opposed, and which had turned out after all to involve property not his own, Hobhouse could not bear him to be represented as having made any sacrifice. He viewed Moore's situation with a ruthlessness none the less deadly because it was entirely cloaked from his own eyes in considerations of propriety and gentlemanliness.

Had he realised that Lady Byron would now be able to transmit to future generations her records of her matrimonial life in the certainty that she would be the sole authority, he might not have congratulated himself so warmly on having stifled for ever the only voice that could make an answer—a voice too which he always, publicly and privately, maintained was "true-spoken." But there was none of Byron's friends who guessed how busy his widow's pen and tongue had been and would remain over the thirty-six years that lay before her.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

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What a Lovely Surprise

BY PENELOPE MORTIMER

PAUL LAWRENCE came back from work early. Jill lost count of the pile of shirts she was checking and impatiently started again, cramming each shirt into the laundry basket and muttering, "One . . . two . . . three . . . four . . ." By the time she had captured them all and written them down in the book, he had shouted for the children and, after a great deal of rustling and whispering, they had shut themselves in the sitting-room.

With desperate speed, she began to count sheets. Louisa, their twelve-year-old daughter, came two steps at a time up the stairs, stopped short on the landing and said furiously, "Oh. There you are. Can't you move?"

"But I'm in the middle of doing the laundry."

"Well, we've got to bring something upstairs. Can't you just go away for a minute?"

Jill dropped her armful of sheets; she had already forgotten how many there were. "All right," she said, trying to look pleased. "I suppose so."

She went and sat on her bed. She was tired, and there was nothing to do in the bedroom so she just sat on the bed and waited. In a few moments she heard them coming up the stairs, the crackle of new, stiff brown paper, her husband swearing as he stumbled over the laundry basket.

"Where shall we put them?"

"Up in the attic, stupid."

"Won't she go up to the attic?"

"Of course she won't."

"Well, how do you know she won't?"

"Oh, do be *quiet* . . ."

They creaked on up the stairs. She gave them another couple of

What a Lovely Surprise

minutes, then crept out of the bedroom and began counting the sheets again.

Paul came down from the attic hitting the dust off his suit and looking exhausted.

"Hullo," he said. "What on earth are you doing?"

"I should have thought it was obvious," she said, writing down six sheets.

"Isn't it rather a peculiar time to be doing the laundry?"

"Well, it goes tomorrow."

"Oh. I see."

He realised, of course, that she couldn't do the laundry tomorrow. He sat down heavily on the stairs, watching her.

"There's an awful lot of it," he said gloomily. "Couldn't we cut down on it a bit?"

She realised that he had spent too much money today and was regretting it. She scooped up three pairs of his pyjamas and pushed them into the corners of the basket.

"If you'd wear drip-dry shirts," she said, "like everybody else."

"But I loathe all that nylon and terylene and stuff."

"Well, then. Eight shirts at one and sevenpence each. Pyjamas are one and ten. No one else sends any clothes to the laundry. Why don't you buy a washing machine?" At last she had the whole lot batted down. She straightened herself, pushing the hair out of her eyes. "You could have bought me one for my birthday, come to think of it."

He was alarmed. "Really? Would you have liked a washing machine? I didn't think of it."

"No," she said. "I wouldn't."

"I could have got one on the H.P.," he insisted. "But I didn't think of it."

"But I don't want one!" she said, smiling desperately.

"All right, then why did you say—?"

The children came out of the attic and peered down over the banisters. "Are you going to stay there all night?" Louisa asked. "We want to bring something down."

"All right," Jill said, dragging the laundry basket across the landing and bumping it down the stairs. "I'm just going."

Penelope Mortimer

She had prepared, as far as possible, for tomorrow. Her birthday cake, with one deceitful candle, was ready in the larder; she had washed the kitchen floor and bought groceries for two days and checked that the tin-opener and the corkscrew were both in the drawer. She took a pile of mending and sat down on the window-seat in the sitting-room. The sun was misty, the small, narrow gardens littered with disorderly September flowers, leaning stacks of Michaelmas daisies, chrysanthemums like spilled copper, Aaron's rod and seedy willow-herb, slovenly splashes of dahlia against the grey brick walls. Somewhere somebody was burning leaves. The clock in the hall chimed and struck the hour.

As she counted the strokes, one hand gloved in her husband's sock, she was momentarily caught by a sharp, composite memory of all her birthdays. She could actually feel anticipation, even pleasure, flash through her, as though tomorrow really contained a mystery; as though she might unwrap something—a doll, the shrouded bulk of a new bicycle—which would really be a surprise, an astonishing happiness. It had left her before the clock had finished striking. If only, she thought, stabbing the hard heel of the sock with the needle, it was all over.

"We want the scissors," Jane announced, bursting through the door. Her round, seven-year-old face was stern. "We are very busy."

"Bring them back," Jill said. "And be careful."

The door slammed, the child pounded upstairs. Two minutes later she was back again.

"Where's the string?"

"I don't think," Jill said brightly, "we've got any string."

Dismay threatened. "What shall we do, then?"

Jill pulled her hand out of the sock, lifted the pile of mending off her knee and began to look for the string. She groped in the back of shelves, hunted through the drawer of the desk which contained bits of sealing wax, dried-up bottles of marking ink, three or four unidentified keys, two pipes, various bits of broken china, an old toothbrush and some lighter flints, but no string. Jane sat down patiently and looked at a magazine. Jill looked systematically through the broom cupboard and kitchen drawers and produced at last a roll of green garden twine and six yards of new pink ribbon intended for reviving

What a Lovely Surprise

someone's party dress. "You'll have to manage with this," she said.

Jane looked at it critically. "All right," she said. "I suppose it'll do."

She went off, and Jill sat down again, lifting back the mending. She decided not to bother with the sock, but to do something restful, like changing all the buttons on Louisa's overcoat. They hadn't brought back the scissors, so she gnawed and pulled at the buttons for a while and then gave up, folding the overcoat neatly over the back of the chair and waiting.

Becky, the middle one, was the next to come down. She put her sharp little face, weighted with horn-rimmed glasses and topped with a scrub of chopped red hair, round the door and asked, "Daddy says, where's the glue?"

"There might be some in the cupboard."

Becky was ten and had just finished a two-year-long impersonation of Roy Rodgers. The change had been sudden and extreme. The checked shirt, the patched jeans, the stringy neck scarf were still in a heap on her bedroom floor. She now wore one of Louisa's petticoats trailing its grubby frill two inches below a velvet skirt she had salvaged from the dressing-up box. She also wore ballet pumps and a large broderie anglaise blouse which Jill remembered putting away to give, in another three or four years' time, to Louisa. Round her neck, instead of the scarf, she wore a broken necklace of plastic beads, cunningly mended with fuse-wire. She looked as though she had just been converted by a visiting missionary.

"Becky——" Jill began.

"Yes?" The huge spectacles, which the child had mistakenly been allowed to choose for herself, flashed innocently.

"Oh, nothing. It should be in the bottom shelf."

"I've got it. By the way, how old will you be tomorrow?"

"A hundred and ninety-five."

"No. Really."

"Thirty-nine." But she couldn't help adding, "I think."

"Gosh. Daddy didn't know." She wandered to the door. "I asked him," she explained. "He said oh, about thirty-five or something."

Penelope Mortimer

Jill smiled. Her face was already beginning to ache a little.

"We need to know, you see, for the play."

"Do you mean to say there's going to be a play?" There was always a play. It took up, mercifully in some ways, most of the afternoon. "*Really?*" she asked incredulously.

"Perhaps I shouldn't have told you. Oh dear."

"It's all right. I'll just pretend I don't know."

In a little while her husband came down.

"Well," he asked in a distraught way, "and how's the birthday girl?"

She looked at him imploringly. She had the absurd idea that she could ask him to abandon the whole thing.

"The children are working like blacks," he said.

"How sweet of them." She smiled quickly.

"Looking forward to your day off?"

"Oh, yes. Of course I am."

"That's good."

He settled himself in an armchair and closed his eyes. The expression on his face was that of a man doggedly resting before a battle that might well be his last.

* * * * *

Next morning she woke, opened her eyes, took in the grey square of window and the sound of rain, snapped her eyes shut again. Thirty-nine, she thought. It didn't mean anything. She was relieved and, turning cautiously over, settled to sleep again.

In five minutes the alarm began to ring. Her husband had, of course, taken the day off. However, being her birthday, the alarm rang half an hour earlier than usual. He groaned and humped about the bed a little, then got up. She heard him putting on his dressing-gown and shuffling out of the room.

"Honestly," she heard before the door closed, "we've been up for hours . . ."

She got quickly out of bed and brushed her hair, peering at herself in the damp mirror with the superstitious feeling that overnight her hair should have gone grey, the wrinkles multiplied. However, she looked much the same, except for the anxious smile that already

What a Lovely Surprise

seemed to be driven into her face. She shut the window and switched on the fire, then got back into bed and folded her hands calmly over her stomach. The great thing, she told herself, is to relax. Just relax, and it may all be quite painless.

The door opened and the three clear, sturdy voices struck up :

"Happy Birthday to you,
Happy Birthday to you,
Happy Birthday"—Paul joined in rather haphazardly—"dear
Mother,
Happy Birthday to you !"

"Oh," she said. "What a lovely surprise."

They filed in, business-like, serious, dumped their packages on the bed, kissed her and stood back. Paul followed with the tea-tray and kissed her and wished her a happy birthday.

"Well," she said, "I don't know where to start."

They glanced at each other and giggled shortly. She began untying the pink ribbon.

"Oh," she said, "what a beautiful card ! Did you make it, Becky ?"

Becky nodded. "I made up the poem too."

"Let's read it, then.

" 'Thirty-nine is not such a very great age to be,
Think how you'd feel if today you were ninety-three.' "

There was a moment's silence.

"Well," Jill said, "I think it's perfectly lovely. And a blotter, too ! Just what I wanted. *Thank* you, darling." She kissed Becky, who blushed almost purple.

"Open mine now," Jane said.

"But it's a needle case ! And you made it all by yourself ! *Thank* you, darling."

While Jill was kissing Jane, Louisa, who thought her youngest sister a frightful show-off, looked distantly out of the window.

"Now," Jill said, "whatever can this be ?" She unwrapped with caution, two quilted coat-hangers. "Oh !" she breathed. "And another poem !"

Penelope Mortimer

"It's not much good," Louisa muttered.

"I'm sure it's brilliant.

" 'You're Thirty-Nine today,
So Happy Birthday, Mum.
You may feel rather old,
But to us you're still Twenty-One ! ' "

Paul choked over his tea. The tray nearly upset and, helped by this distraction, Jill kissed Louisa warmly. The worst was over.

The remaining presents were from Paul. The sweater, a size bigger than last year's, would be quite possible if she took the collar off and had it dyed. She said it was lovely, and the perfume was lovely and the Braque print—she nervously turned it the right way up—was really lovely.

"I think it's perfectly ghastly," Louisa said.

"Oh well"—Jill was amazed to hear herself saying—"we can't all have the same tastes, can we? And it's *awfully* cheerful." She kissed her husband gratefully. "I don't know how to thank you," she said. "Such wonderful presents."

Something was wrong, her tone of voice or what she said; there ought to be more. They waited, and she kept smiling, and at last Paul said, "Well, you'd all better go off and get dressed or something. I'll go down and get breakfast."

"I really don't want any," Jill said. "Please don't—"

"But you always have breakfast in bed on your birthday!" Louisa blazed. "You always do!"

"Oh well, then. All right. Thank you," she said humbly.

Left alone, she wound up all the pink ribbon which, if ironed, might still do for the party dress. She folded the wrapping paper and arranged the cards on the mantelpiece and got back into bed. A faint smell of burning crept up from the kitchen. How wonderful it is, she told herself sharply, to be loved.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The rule on her birthday was that she was not allowed to do anything. This had started when Louisa was about four. It had impressed Louisa, if no one else, as a wonderful idea and she had never

What a Lovely Surprise

allowed it to be forgotten. She was a highly organised child, very good at giving orders. Combined with remarkable beauty this made her, at twelve, rather formidable.

Unhappily dressed in the new sweater, Jill sidled downstairs at about ten o'clock. Louisa was vacuuming the sitting-room.

"Why didn't you stay in bed?" she asked. "And rest?"

"Oh well . . ." Jill said.

"It's a pity, because if it was a nice day you could sit in the garden."

"Yes," Jill said.

"Well, do you mind moving, because I want to Hoover over there?"

Jill went back to the bedroom and did her nails. When they were dry she thought of tidying her drawers and this reminded her that she had, for weeks, been meaning to move the chest of drawers over to the other side of the room where it would not only look better but hide a small patch of damp on the wall. She resolutely put this idea out of her head and went downstairs again. Louisa was dusting, Becky finishing the washing up. They both seemed disappointed to see her so she went and stood in the dining-room for a little while, looking with interest at the rain, until Jane burst in and said, "Oh. *You're* here. We're going to lay the table now."

"But it's not nearly lunch time!"

"Well, that's what Louisa told me to do. Couldn't you," she suggested sympathetically, "go for a walk or something?"

Jill went upstairs again and looked at the chest of drawers. She closed the door and cautiously pulled out the drawers, balancing them on the bed. Then she pulled the heavy chest carefully, inch by inch, across the room. One of its feet got caught in the carpet, so she lay down on her stomach, lifting up the chest with one hand while niftily tucking the carpet down under its foot with the other. She was lying half under the bed and had just got the carpet straightened out when Louisa came in.

"I brought you some coffee," Louisa said, and then, "Oh! What are you *doing*?"

Jill got up and took the cup, without looking at her. "Thank you," she said. "I was just moving the chest of drawers."

"But why?" Louisa wailed, "On your birthday?"

Penelope Mortimer

"Oh, don't be so silly," Jill snapped. "Why shouldn't I move the chest of drawers on my birthday if I want to?"

"But you're meant to be resting!"

"But I don't *want* to rest!"

They glared at each other and slowly, painfully, Louisa's eyes filled with tears. Jill held out her hands, but the child turned her head away and ran down the stairs. Nobody, Jill remembered hopelessly, cried on her birthday. She knelt down and heaved savagely at the chest, upsetting the cup of coffee which poured, a scalding christening, over her new sweater.

"Louisa's thoroughly upset," Paul said from the doorway. "I do think you might— What on *earth* are you doing?"

"I'm trying," she said, getting up slowly, "to move the chest of drawers. It isn't a crime. It isn't hurting anybody. It isn't spoiling anyone's fun."

"Look at that sweater."

"I know."

"It's ruined. When I think what it cost—"

"Don't tell me," she said. "I can always have it dyed."

"Why can't you rise to the occasion a bit? You've thoroughly upset Louisa."

"Is it Louisa's birthday," she snapped suddenly, "or mine?"

"Everyone's trying their damndest to please you."

"Oh, really. If that's your attitude."

"Good God, if you can't appreciate it, I'm sorry."

"Oh . . ." She hung her head, watching the pale grey coffee dripping on to the carpet. "Of course I appreciate it, Paul."

"Well, then. Now where do you want this chest of drawers?"

"Over there," she said humbly.

He picked it up, carried it across the room and dumped it against the wall.

"Now," he said, "why don't you go downstairs and look at a magazine or something?"

"All right." It struck her that they were behaving in the most curious way. He looked shifty and sick and it suddenly occurred to her that he really hated her birthday, hated her growing older. That, in fact, he was ashamed. She was certain of it. He was ashamed

What a Lovely Surprise

because he could no longer avoid knowing that she was middle aged.

"Paul——" she began.

"Well?" He had his back to her, pushing in the drawers.

She couldn't think what to say. "Do you love me?"

"Of course. You might just have a word with Louisa. She tries hard on your birthday."

"I know," she said. "You all do."

"Well, then. I'll go and get the lunch. You just relax. You know—relax a bit."

"Yes," she said. "All right."

He went heavily downstairs. She sat down on the bed and began pulling the fluff off the blanket, rolling it between her finger and thumb.

* * * * *

The play, this year, concerned two princes captured by a wicked wizard and saved in the nick of time by a benevolent fairy aged thirty-nine. Last year it had been two princesses captured by a wicked witch and saved in the nick of time by a benevolent fairy aged thirty-eight. Jane and Becky played the princes and Louisa doubled for the other parts. It was full of "Oho!" and "By my troth!" and "Whither away?" After each scene Jane applauded loudly and was scolded by Louisa. In the interval, while Louisa was bringing up the birthday cake and ice cream, Jane and Becky danced to a long-playing record of Sidney Bechet. As time wore on their faces became grimmer and their breathing louder, but they continued to lollop bravely about and never moved their eyes from the audience, which kept smiles of appreciation clamped firmly on both their faces. At last the record ended, Jill cut the cake and remembered to wish.

"What did you wish?" Jane asked.

"Don't be silly. She can't tell. Come on, we've got to do the second scene now."

They hurried busily away.

"It's a lovely play," Jill said timidly. "Are you all right?"

Her husband nodded. He was absolutely exhausted and had put down four dry martinis before lunch in order to nerve himself for

Penelope Mortimer

the washing up. Jill had changed into a dress, and made up her face with great care. In spite of this, she had begun to feel slightly hysterical. It was not surely necessary for the fairy to grow so old?

"Gadzooks!" Louisa cried, looking evil, "those princes will make me a jolly fine supper . . ."

At the end of the play the entire cast sang *God Save The Queen* and *Happy Birthday To You*. Then the curtains were drawn back and Jane inexplicably burst into tears. Becky, too, hung about looking moistly through her enormous glasses.

"They're tired," Jill muttered, patting them hopelessly, "I'll put them to bed."

"You can't," Louisa said, looking disgusted under her benevolent fairy's crown. "It's your birthday. You're going out. I'll put them, if they're such babies."

"But I'm sure there's time——"

"You wouldn't want Mummy to bath you, would you? On her birthday?"

Dumb, guilty, swamped in tears, Jane shook her head.

"Then come on." A tinsel and muslin wardress, she pushed them out of the room. "And if you're good," Jill heard her saying, "you can watch television for half an hour but, mind you, not a minute longer." Their voices, like the voices of tired, nattering old women, retreated up the stairs.

Jill tidied the sitting-room and poured herself a drink. The day weighed heavily on her, like some expensive mistake, a lapse of good taste which, once paid for, is irrevocable. The bonfire had been extinguished by the day's rain. Some of the leaves on the laburnum had turned yellow overnight, but this was the only sign of autumn. The air had become clear and watery as spring and birds were twittering and fussing in the tall, grimy trees. The year, yesterday so mellow, had become petrified in a grey, damp evening.

"Well, shall we go?"

She turned reluctantly. Paul had changed his suit, but not his expression. He went straight over to the decanter and poured himself a triple whisky.

"Yes," she said. "When you're ready."

"I'm ready now."

What a Lovely Surprise

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Penelope Mortimer

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"I'm ready now."

What a Lovely Surprise

"All right, then. Let's go."

"Well, what do you mean, when I'm ready?"

"Nothing. Where are we going?"

"Where do we always go on your birthday? Pierre's, of course."

"How silly of me," she said. "I should have known."

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

They came home, rather unsteadily and in silence, about eleven. The children were all asleep. The house felt surprisingly normal, freed from tension. There was even a banana skin in the sitting-room grate which Louisa hadn't tidied away. They climbed slowly upstairs, not speaking, yawned and sighed in the cold bedroom. It's over, they both thought, pulling off their shoes. Weariness, apathy, drowned them. They moved about the room as languidly and pointlessly as fish in a small tank. When, at last, she had turned down the coverlet, put his pyjamas ready on the pillow, opened the window, turned off the main light, he was still standing in his shirt looking vaguely about the room. She had already forgotten about her birthday. Her face, after an enormous yawn, settled back lax and unsmiling.

"Do hurry," she said. "I'm dropping."

He picked up his pyjamas, looked at them with distaste and let them fall in a heap on the floor. Then he wandered to the cupboard, took out a clean pair of pyjamas and began, with laborious concentration, to undo the buttons.

In one movement she sat upright. Her whole body was stiff and trembling. "You can't," she said, "wear clean pyjamas."

He lowered towards her, his head stuck forward. "Why not?"

"You had clean pyjamas last night."

"And is there any reason," he enquired, skidding a little over the words, "why I shouldn't have clean pyjamas tonight as well?"

"Of course there is!" She was desolate, outraged. "We can't afford the laundry! You said so yourself! We can't afford the laundry!"

At last he let fly. "Then why don't you wash them yourself instead of fooling around all day moving the furniture?"

"Why should I wash your horrible pyjamas? Why should I?"

Penelope Mortimer

"Don't shout," he said. "I cannot stand you shouting."

"Why shouldn't I shout?"

"Because," he said, "you are too old to shout."

They stared at each other. All sound, even the sound of breathing had stopped. He went out of the room, carrying the clean pyjamas. He went downstairs. She heard the sitting-room door close.

He had drunk too much, of course. It had been a strain. She had only been trying to save him the expense of the laundry. He was over-tired. He would soon come back and apologise. She turned off the bedside light and lay on her back, staring at the patterns of the street lamp on the ceiling. The clock chimed and began to strike midnight. Next year, she realised, I shall be forty. She lay waiting, the little smile of gratitude fixed on her face, a distant welcome.

Christmases

BY MARGIAD EVANS

When we were children
Christmases used to come in from the woods—
We fetched them, trundled them, sledged them, stole them,
The frost on our faces : the branches nodded their beards,
And the moon was gray on the bent, cold, grass—
Cat-ice crackled its broken glass
Like fireworks under our feet as we snapped it.
Christmases used to come in from the woods !
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

To-night is Christmas again and I sitting alone
Weave sleep for my child in my arms,
My arms which are forced
Into the old cradle shape, a bitter woman, ill to the bone.
There is never a Christmas night for me in this world again,
For I am not a child ;
Christmases used to come in from the woods
Old and wild
But never alone
Gloria in excelsis Deo !

Te Deum

BY PETER LUKE

THE full moon was shining with great brilliance on me where I lay on the sand until a large fat man wearing a tin hat lowered himself down beside me so that his bottom cast me into shadow. Immediately I resented him, never having met him before, in the way that I would had he invaded my privacy in a railway carriage. All the same his presence was in one way reassuring because he had foolishly placed himself on the enemy side.

Because I was there first and because I have a sense of social obligation I opened the conversation : " You may think it strange my lying down," I said, " but I have been wounded in the foot and I find it difficult to get about."

To this he replied, without any acknowledgement of my condition, " I'm lying down because it's a bloody sight less dangerous than standing up."

It is important to correct at this stage any impression that I was carrying off this predicament with sang-froid. On the contrary. Things had not gone at all well for me ever since the battle had started some hours earlier. I was twenty-one years old then and full of a romantic desire to acquit myself well. I had just read *War and Peace*—some of it by the light of the last full moon—and, in spite of the fact that I had in the last year or two discovered T. S. Eliot and Dylan Thomas for myself, I still had G. A. Henty and Rudyard Kipling in my system.

Soon after the barrage had started, my truck had got stuck in some soft sand at the entrance to the gap in the minefield, thus isolating those who had gone before and blocking effectively the main armoured force to follow. A carrier-load of the first wounded—a pretty gory lot, one fellow with his leg off at the thigh and another lying on his stomach with his back ripped up—was also trying to get back

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through the narrow gap. If physical strength had been equal to endeavour we would have lifted our vehicle bodily out on to the hard bit of ground only a few yards away but, though desperation had given me maniacal strength, there was nothing we could do owing to the weight of the extra machine-gun ammunition we were carrying. We had just begun to unload the truck when one of our guns taking part in the barrage started to drop them short; thenceforward for the next quarter of an hour it plopped a twenty-five pound shell at short regular intervals into our vicinity.

We had set out on the approach march in high spirits. I was certainly greatly elated and communicated it, I think, to the others. At the opening of the spectacular barrage Sergeant Jefford said, "I'll bet that's making Old Jerry shit blue lights!" and we all roared. And when this gunner behind us began laying short the men still joked, slightly hysterically, with such remarks as "I'll tell 'is muvver abaht 'im" and so on.

Just as we had all the ammunition on the ground, one landed within ten yards of the truck. Because it landed in the same patch of soft sand that we were stuck in, most of the shrapnel went upwards but it was sobering and at that stage we had not properly joined battle.

At that moment Hugh, my company commander, appeared on foot from the gap where he had been with the leading platoon.

"What in God's name are you doing?" he said without—quite understandably—giving a thought to the convention of not bawling out an officer in front of the troops. "You're holding up a whole Armoured Division."

In spite of the cool night the sweat was pouring down my face and I think this concealed the tears of frustration that came into my eyes. Also my shortness of breath from exertion concealed the catch in my voice when I said, "I'm sorry, Hugh, but I couldn't avoid the soft sand. There wasn't room."

"I don't care. Get that bloody vehicle out of here and get up forward where you're wanted."

His tone, it seemed to me then, implied that I had deliberately got myself stuck in order to avoid going on. In fact, at that moment, though never thereafter, I would have rushed alone on to a Panzer Grenadier regiment. It seemed that the 'Scorpion,' a fantastic

conversion of a tank into a sort of lawn-mower designed to detonate a path through the enemy minefield, had been knocked out by an anti-tank gun and that my Vickers machine-guns were required to put this last out of action. Abandoning my truck to the crew I ran forward through the soft sand and up the narrow lane the 'Scorpion' had ploughed until I was blowing like a tubed race-horse. The few seconds saved by this exertion would not, of course, have made the slightest difference to the outcome of the battle but I was stung by Hugh's apparent unfairness.

Hugh was standing by the black and uncomfortably conspicuous monument of the dead 'Scorpion' with my leading machine-gun truck behind it. A platoon on foot with some sappers was vaguely weaving about in front; beyond them was the enemy, dug-in and invisible except for irregular streams of tracer-bullets that seemed to come very slowly out of the ground like the unfolding of a Japanese paper water-plant.

Hugh pointed out the muzzle-flash of the anti-tank gun as it fired again and almost instantaneously something like a very fast ball on a dry wicket bumped on the ground near the tank and bounced off into the air in a whirring long-hop.

"Get on to that bloody gun before they hit the 'Scorpion's' petrol tank and light up the whole gap."

"Okay, Hugh," I said, confidence restored with the prospect of making myself, at last, effective. Jumping on to the truck next to Halsey, the driver, I told him to pull off to the left and go about a hundred yards away from the 'Scorpion'. Hugh, in a less peremptory tone of voice, said something about manhandling the machine-gun because of the possibility of more mines but, because of the indefinite way he put it and because of the pandemonium of gun-fire, I waved ambiguous acknowledgement and set off with nothing now in front but the moon and the occasional flash from our objective, cheerful at the prospect of vindicating myself.

The next thing seemed to be a great concussion that occurred almost simultaneously with my biting, literally, the dust. It so winded me that for a moment I could not breathe. In this condition I realised that we had gone over a mine and the knowledge of my stupidity and failure got me to my feet determined at least to make the best

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of a lousy job. Poor little Halsey seemed to have lost an eye but the rest of the gun-crew were just standing about repeating over and over again the invariable swear-words. In desperation I shouted the first gun-drill orders that came into my head and these seemed to take effect for the men off-loaded the Vickers and set it up a few yards away from the wrecked truck. Indicating the target, I gave a fire order and awaited the controlled, regulated bursts and the ensuing streams of tracer which one was accustomed to expect. Nothing happened. Rifleman Schwartz, number one on the gun, was crouched over the sights with his hands in the correct manner on the firing mechanism. Thinking he hadn't heard me, I repeated the order. Again nothing happened. Schwartz sat there as still as the sentry at Pompei. I felt like crying.

Poor Schwartz, being of German-Jewish origin, had, for the last two months, been applying to change his name by deed poll to Black. He was, reasonably enough, terrified of being taken prisoner, but at the time of going into action, the official sanction had not come through. All this passed through my mind. Gradually then I began to understand that Schwartz was either petrified with fear or concussed by the explosion—or both. I pushed him with some difficulty away from the gun and told the corporal to take over as Number 1. Finally the Vickers hiccuped rather hesitantly into action.

Hugh suddenly appeared at my side. "You bloody fool!" he said, in a low contemptuous tone that was quite audible in spite of the ever-increasing din of battle, and walked away again. I murmured, "I'm terribly sorry, Hugh" into the moon-struck, demoniac void. I really meant it. Frequently before and afterwards I had wished myself a thousand miles elsewhere in great comfort amidst sympathetic and understanding friends, but never so much as at that moment.

* * * * *

The day had started so well in the way I had come to expect from early reading of *Leatherstocking Tales*, *In Times of Peril*, *Soldiers Three* and other romantic books. The sun had risen as usual on that morning of the 23rd October which slightly surprised me as I half expected some supernatural manifestation to mark the occasion. I had dressed with some care and had taken out my oldest and nicest twill trousers

from the bottom of the ammunition box which I used for clothes. They were clean and almost white from numerous washings and I put them on ceremoniously. I wore my best pair of suede desert-boots and a thick woollen khaki shirt which would absorb the sweat during the day and later keep me warm at night. A good silk bandana round my neck gave me the feeling of being well-dressed, and a green forage-cap which, though it gave less protection against sun than a service-dress cap, was more suitable to wear with head-phones.

After the business of the morning : the receiving and giving of orders, the checking of vehicles, stores and equipment, the loading of magazines and filling of belts of ammunition, there was nothing left to do so I sat in the front of my truck and wrote a letter to the girl with whom at that time I was in love. It was a letter full of suppressed emotion hinting, as far as I thought the censor would allow, that this was the eve of great feats of arms. Whatever I put into that letter I doubted then that I could ever make her see me, even in her imagination, as a bronzed hero about to go into battle with a smile on his lips. In this, as it turned out, I was quite right.

Having finished my *nos morituri te salutamus* despatch I settled down to a novel by Evelyn Waugh which had the desired effect of taking my mind off the imminence of bloodshed. Tony, a young, well-seasoned and much wounded major who was then second-in-command of our battalion, seeing me thus composed, came across. "Good Lord," he said, "how can you concentrate on reading at a time like this?" I released a smile that I hoped was both modest and serene.

That evening as the full moon rose the army started to move, slowly at first, starting with the smallest units and gradually gathering momentum as infantry and sappers were joined by tanks and anti-tank guns, armoured command cars, gunner O.P.s and a mass of such miscellaneous vehicles as made up the teeth of a mechanised striking force.

The columns, converging on the gaps in the home minefields, grew in numbers every few hundred yards so that vehicles were at times double-banked nose-to-tail, stopping, starting, grinding on in slow gear or racing forward to keep contact with those in front until the moon-bright desert seemed like the scene of some long-forgotten border-ride.

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The huge moon seemed to be moving always ahead of us. Between the minefields stood two Senussi bedouin, motionless and separate in their own world, wondering but tranquil. A shout made me turn and there was Jackie alongside. It has never occurred to me since to ask him what he was doing there.

"Like trying to get to Sandown on Bank Holiday," he shouted.

"What's that?" I yelled back.

"Sandown . . . Bank Holiday," he repeated, making tic-tac signs to emphasise his meaning.

I laughed and waved to him as he disappeared again into the throng.

A tank had ground its way authoritatively between us and I looked up to see John Harding, the new divisional commander, in the turret with Robin, his G2, beside him. I stood up in the truck and saluted with brio, trying to model myself on young Rostov at the battle of Borodino. The general waved amiably, smiling. Robin, being very *affairé*, nodded curtly and the tank, followed by its attendant armoured car, threaded its way forward.

I started to think of this girl again and childishly wished she could see me in this dramatic setting. In the middle of blushing at such puerile sentiments I was interrupted by the voice of David who, standing lonely and dismounted as the advancing army surged past him, called out rather hopelessly, "Have you seen the Colonel, old chap?"

"No," I answered, "but I've seen practically everybody else I know."

"Oh, Lord," he said. "I must find him."

He stood there looking perplexed and forlorn. As we moved on he started to say something else, but his voice became drowned in the noise of grinding gears and churning tracks.

Passing with this mailed cohort through the last of our own minefields I found myself gazing with fascination at the ground which for so many weeks past had been a no-man's-land intently scanned through glasses by day and stealthily explored by patrols at night. Being accustomed to the necessary dispersion of open desert in daylight and to Red Indian tactics after dark, the present City rush-hour traffic created a strong feeling of unreality.

On this strange new ground I saw another man I vaguely recognised.

Peter Luke

He had been at school with me but had altered in the intervening years. He was staring intently at his watch and, as I drew level, he looked up.

"This should be about it," he said, as though a conversation of many years ago had never been interrupted. I was struggling to remember his name when the sky erupted with a hundred simultaneous flashes followed instantly by the pandemoniac thunder of guns. I looked at my watch and noted that the battle had begun exactly on time.

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I have always been amazed, in spite of much contrary experience, how any misadventure can be put right without my personal intervention. But, after being blown up on the minefield and having subsequently had the order to continue the advance, I was pleasantly surprised, being in a state of some despair, to find the rest of my platoon waiting for me. So, abandoning of necessity the wounded truck and distributing the weapons and crew round the other vehicles, we went forward.

Recovering a little from the initial *schwerpunkt*, the enemy were perking up and stuff was beginning to come back : not much artillery as yet but plenty of small-arms and thin jets of tracer were hosing round in all directions like streamers at a New Year's ball. What added to the fiesta-like quality of the evening was the pyrotechnic display of coloured very lights that the enemy were putting up in their frenzied desire to communicate the emergency to each other.

There seemed to be some sort of hold-up just in front and now that we were through the enemy minefield our people had spread out into a semi-circular bridge-head. I therefore had a few moments of leisure in which to indulge in my favourite occupation of gazing about me and letting my mind wander. Assuming that to every one tracer bullet there were at least three invisible ones I was beginning to wonder what sort of pattern, if the courses could be plotted, all these bullets were making round *me* personally when Bill, who was second-in-command of our company, came up and told me to get the machine-guns into action and to engage an area where a lot of enemy fire was coming from.

This seemed to be exactly the job for us.

"Good, Bill! Fine!" I said. "Right-ho! Okay!" And in a few minutes all four guns were sweetly pumping lead into the desert with drill precision. I began to feel better and went from gun to gun saying encouraging things like: "Well done, So-and-so! Keep at it! Nice easy traversing, now. Sights up a bit. That's the stuff!" and all the usual guff. I began to think all might be forgiven but I was too optimistic. Hugh rushed up. "For Chrisake cease fire!" he shouted. "You're firing right into the leading platoon. Mulford's been badly hit."

"But Hugh . . ." I said, deflated at once. But he went on:

"What the hell did you open fire for anyway?"

Quite suddenly I lost my temper.

"I was *ordered* to engage that bloody target," I shouted, turning round to face Hugh, but he had already disappeared.

I went off to find Bill and vent my grievance. Bill was—and still is—a well-built fellow and very calm, but he was upset about Mulford. Bradbury and Mulford were the two best sergeants in the Company. Of heroic stature, they were at that time both young, handsome, of splendid physique, dead shots, intrepid and full of initiative. I think at least one, if not both, had already been decorated by that time. Apart from personal feelings, therefore, it was not unnatural that Bill, who had great concern for the men, should have been upset.

We were walking along together; he was a few paces in front and the moon was so bright that I noticed a sore on the back of his neck. Bill had a low and what is sometimes described as well-modulated voice but suddenly he let out a silly, feminine little "Ow!" and fell down.

"Are you all right, Bill?" I asked rather stupidly, and the next second my leg received what felt like a hard belt from a heavy stick so that I too fell down. Bill started to shout for Hugh, calling out that he had been hit. "I've been hit too, Bill," I said. But he didn't take any notice.

Some minutes later Hugh came up and got some fellows to cart Bill away. They didn't come back for me but eventually Bonning, my driver, came over with my tin hat and advised me to put it on. I apologised for causing him the trouble and explained that I had been

Peter Luke

wounded. He said, "You've got dead lucky, you have. There's a bullet-hole right through the back of your seat in the truck."

He squatted down whilst we chatted for a moment. I told him to share out my liquor and tinned fruit amongst the others and then sent him back to tell Sergeant Jefford to take over the platoon. That was the last I ever heard of Bonning.

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That was how I came to be lying beside the fat man on the sand in the moonlight.

The fat man took the opportunity of a comparative lull in hostilities to get his huge bulk perpendicular and left leaving me feeling very exposed. I therefore tried to get up and found that I could hop without much pain (I hadn't been feeling very much in any case) and so I hopped in stages over to company headquarter's truck where I found Corporal Bower and his mate extremely busy on the two wireless sets. I admired very much the detachment with which they concentrated on maintaining communications sitting as they were completely unprotected and high above the ground.

After a while Hugh came back. "Look," he said, "there's a truck going back with wounded. You'd better get on it . . . and look after Mulford. He's very bad." So I got on to the back of the truck and made myself as comfortable as possible. Then Mulford was handed up to me and I got him in the best position possible which was in my arms with his head against my shoulder as if I were spooning with a girl. In this way I could cushion him a bit against the bumps. He seemed quite unconscious but murmured a bit from time to time.

We started back over the uneven ground. The driver was a good little chap who later became a sergeant but he lost his way, for which he could hardly be blamed, and I could not navigate owing to my position and having poor Mulford in my arms. I was getting rather worried about him because he soon stopped murmuring and so I started swearing at the driver who, though lost, was doing his best to get us back to the Casualty Clearing Station. I suppose I was beginning to suffer from shock myself and each time we lurched over some particularly bad ground I cursed rather hysterically at the driver.

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I saw him often later on in the war but he never alluded to the occasion nor appeared to bear any resentment.

The moon was going down when we reached the Casualty Clearing Station. My first impression of it was that it was very little different from the one to which Prince Andrey was taken after the battle of Borodino except for the availability of morphine, sulphanilamide and the saline drip. There was a tent or two surrounded by men on stretchers variously wounded and a number of doctors and orderlies moving about with an air of urgency. A few long-range but heavy enemy shells were lobbing over so that the medical staff were working under duress. It was my impression then, and subsequent experience confirmed it, that the nearer they were to the front line the better the medical profession behaved.

A doctor and some orderlies came over to the truck. I explained about Mulford and handed him gently down and they laid him on a stretcher. The M.O. went over him perfunctorily and then turned to me with a funny look in his eye.

"What did you want to bring him all the way back here for?" he said. "He's been dead some time."

This was a shock. I had made several attempts to take Mulford's pulse but it had been impossible because of the bouncing of the truck, so I had just held him as still as possible. So Mulford was dead and I was sorry, but somehow I guessed it anyway. What really upset me now was the implication (for the second time in one night) that I had invented an excuse to get away from the battle.

He was still looking at me, very straight in the face, as all these thoughts and attendant emotions raced through my head. "I don't think I need detain you any longer," he said.

"Oh, but . . ." I said with the sudden pleasant realisation that I was about to play a small trump card, "I've been wounded too."

The M.O.'s face gave a slight start of guilt which was all that I required from him.

"Oh . . . have you?" he said. Then, after a momentary pause, "Well, hop off then." And he gave me a hand down.

But the miseries of the night were not yet over. The stretcher-bearers carried me over and put me down amongst others lying outside the tents. Two stretchers away was a man with the plasma tubed

into his leg from a bottle attached to a tent-rope. He had been badly wounded in the groin and he moved his head regularly from side to side, sometimes raising it to try and have a look at the damage done to himself. But this last effort was mercifully beyond him and his head fell back and again started to move rhythmically from side to side. Although untouched about the upper part of his body, his appearance had altered so strangely that I watched him for some time before I realised that it was Sergeant Bradbury. I shot upright on the stretcher.

"Sergeant Bradbury!" I said. "Bradbury! It's me . . ."

But he never answered nor showed any sign of recognition. Nor, I gathered, did he ever speak again. So Bradbury and Mulford, the two who had seemed so indestructible, both died on the same night.

Somebody then quite unnecessarily stuck a shot of morphia into me and eventually I was put into an ambulance which rumbled off into the night.

Soon the sound of gun-fire receded and a pleasant drowsiness came over me and I allowed myself to imagine I was in a *wagon-lits* going to Alt-Aussee in the Saltzkammergut for the summer. I played this game with myself for a while and listened in my mind's ear to the sounds of European railway stations at night; to the sounds of girls selling '*Chocolade—cigaretten—mineralwasser*' on the platform, until I was gradually prised out of my soft drugged dream by another noise—of someone very close and in great pain cursing violently but indistinctly. I was brought back to my senses by this agonised voice which was enraged to the point of being tearful; above all it was a voice I thought I knew. I could see quite well in spite of the darkness inside the ambulance and a figure, his whole head and face shrouded in bandages, was slowly waving his bound arms in the air.

"Is there anything I can do?" I asked him.

"Get them to stop. Get them to stop," was all that he would say. I realised that he had been badly burned—in a tank presumably—and that there was probably not much point in my stopping the ambulance but with some difficulty I did so all the same. They gave him a shot of morphia and we went on.

The familiarity of his voice worried me. He was obviously an

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officer in one of our armoured regiments and he might easily have been a friend.

"Who are you?" I asked. But all he would say was, "I wish to Christ they would stop." Gradually the morphine took effect and he quietened down. I never found out who he was.

Sometime during that interminable night we arrived somewhere. That is to say we were taken out of the ambulance and carried on our stretchers into a tent.

"Where are we?" I asked.

"El Alamein," was the reply.

"Let a *Te Deum* be sung," I said.

"What's that?"

"Nothing."

"Lousee Pommee baaastard!" came an unmistakable accent out of the darkness.

After that I went to sleep more or less, but my mind was such a vortex of conflicting emotions in which fear, elation, mortification, relief, anger, happiness and sorrow, to mention some of the less complicated ones, were all jostled together, that to call it sleep was an over-simplification. Eventually, however, I must have gone off because my next conscious realisation was of being in a big tent with bright sunshine outside and a doctor going from stretcher to stretcher.

As I lay there letting the flood of recent memory return a Church of England Padre came into the tent. He was shaved and, for an excusably un-military figure, looked quite spruce. He also gave an impression of one who recently had had a good breakfast and a satisfactory evacuation. He walked in rubbing his hands crisply together.

"Any dead?" he called over to the M.O. in a cheerful voice.

"Any dead?" Any dead?"

The House on Balaton

BY GORDON SHEPHERD

THE midsummer of 1956 was an odd time for the junior director of the Thanet Chemical Combine (Head Offices, Aldwych, London) to find himself in Hungary. It was the sultry prelude to the thunderclap of the October Revolution. A long-suffocated nation had just begun to breathe again—those unbelieving gulps of air when the blanket is first lifted from the head.

In Budapest itself, the Western visitor was struck more by the absurdities than by the tension of these weeks of experiment. Busloads of 'progressive' tourists from Turin, Lille and Sheffield drove in their charabancs past the political prisons of the Foe Utca, their gaze carefully diverted by guides to the picture postcard view of the Gothic Parliament across the Danube. The Communist leaders had become as democratic as Scandinavian monarchs. Even the egg-bald, five-feet-nothing dictator Rakosi, then in the last days of his reign, turned up on the lawn of the British Legation, to drink his first and last cup of Queen's Birthday tea with the exiled English ex-governesses. The indestructible bourgeois of Budapest were back on the sports clubs of the Margit Island, already complaining that the regime would allot no hard currency to buy British tennis balls. The black marketeers, whose private enterprise was suddenly tolerated, brought in their 'gift cars' from Western Germany, and built themselves weekend houses on the wooded slopes below the Hármashatárhegy. There were legally imported Swiss nylons on the legs of the street charmers; officially tolerated Louis Armstrong in the workers' cafés of Csepel; and real Scotch in the bars of the foreigners' hotels. East and West were face to face again after nearly ten years of separation, and each was a little dazed at the encounter.

John Coates' own visit—his first for exactly twenty years—also belonged to this calculated paradox which was soon to explode in the

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Communists' hands. As part of the economic 'thaw,' the regime had given top priority to rebuilding Hungary's once-famous pharmaceutical industry, and 'capitalist' markets were accordingly being sought for all the better products. 'Chemitex,' the Communist State organ for the industry, proved an eager and amenable business partner. After five days of easy negotiation, Coats concluded a £1,100,000 deal on excellent terms for his firm. The occasion was celebrated with a massive lunch at Gundels, at which he found himself the guest of honour of the Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade.

The Hungarian aspirin and penicillin envisaged in that contract and toasted at that lunch never reached London. Indeed, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade himself failed to survive that fatal autumn. His Magyar feelings were soon to get the better of his party membership card and, by the end of October, he found himself waving green-white-red Hungarian flags with a hole where the Communist emblem should have been—the mutilation which became the improvised badge of the patriots. In November, he crept back to his mahogany desk as though nothing had happened but had the bad luck to be recognised by the Budapest police bloodhounds from a press photograph of the uprising in a French news magazine. From that point he ceased abruptly to dispense over the country's aspirins, though his own need of them had, with equal suddenness, become far greater.

But though he never saw his wares nor his host again, that lunch became memorable for Coates because of the strange week-end on Lake Balaton which resulted from it. This was made possible by yet another anomaly of the times. 'Chemitex,' like all the robot trade agencies, had been told to step off its monolithic pedestal when dealing with Western businessmen, and adopt a 'personal approach.' Furthermore, in a fit of false confidence and bad conscience, the regime had just lifted virtually all restrictions on the movements of foreigners inside Hungary, including the strict security ban on certain areas around Balaton, which were still concentration areas for Soviet troops.

Thus it was that, over the apricot brandy, Coates found himself accepting with delight an invitation to 'see something of our beautiful country' on his way home and to spend a night at a Government rest centre on the northern shore of the lake. The real reason for his delight he was careful to keep from his hosts. It was that, in the heyday of

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Regent Horthy twenty years before, he had spent a holiday on the estate not far from Balaton of a Hungarian cousin by marriage, who had been forced by the Communists to exchange his shot-guns for a coal shovel which he wielded ten hours a day at Budapest's North Railway station. Those four weeks in Western Hungary in the distant summer of 1936 had been something which had both tickled and satisfied every appetite a young man possessed. To recapture the golden memory, John Coates was prepared to visit a country house hung with nothing but portraits of Marx, Lenin and Engels and even, if need be, to share a bedroom with the North Korean Minister of Popular Culture—or whoever else was enjoying the rest centre's hospitality. But, as it turned out, these sacrifices were not to be demanded of him.

The many astonishments of that weekend began at nine the next morning when an aged but still quite impressive Buick belonging to the 'Visitors' Pool' of the Ministry of Foreign Trade was brought to the entrance of Coates' hotel and handed over to him full of petrol for him to drive unescorted to his destination—with full particulars how to get there and the assurance that 'everything had been arranged.' Coates looked twice at the greasy cloth cap of the Ministry's driver to remind him on which side of the Iron Curtain he had woken up.

The two-hour drive down to Balaton, alone in a Communist official car, and travelling through country which until the previous month had been closed to all Western eyes, was a peculiar experience for a staid London company director. Coates was fifty-two, with dark hair just thinning and greying, and a soul running to fat at about the same cautious speed as his body. Only last week, the meaning of life seemed to centre around reducing his handicap of ten at Sunningdale and pursuing his long-term campaign of lobbying, donating and Public Servicing for the K.B.E. But now, as he moved south out of the capital in the morning sunshine, following the right bank of the Danube and then drove on unmolested through Baracksa, Gárdony, and Székesfehérvár, he felt the adventure of 1936 closing round him again, and realised that he would swop the President's Putter to be able to live it once more.

How little in fact had changed! In the market place of Csoer,

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the inn sign of the 'Golden Knight' still stood on its creaking brackets and there was still painted on the plaster wall the elaborate arms of the Szedresy family, to commemorate that stormy night in 1726 when the Countess, stranded *en route* to her doctors in Buda, had given birth to a son there. Untidy regiments of geese still formed up in the streets of Oeskue, hissing their hatred for all motor-cars. The garden walls of Soly were still lined with the lunatic faces of giant sun-flowers.

It was almost with reluctance that at Veszprém he left the main south-west route he was remembering so well, and moved down a narrow dirt road for Balatonfüred. But the illusion of *tempi passati* was due to be continued even there.

A first drive through the village, which was a tiny fishing 'harbour' on the great smooth lake, backed by cool woods, failed to disclose anything resembling an official rest centre. Enquiries in broken German and another careful look at his instructions sent him through an open iron gate half a mile above the village and along a curving gravel drive. After a few hundred yards, the house came into sight, shaded on the land side by a semi-circle of forest and facing the lake to the front across a plateau of well-kept lawns. It was a typical early eighteenth-century shooting-box of the simpler Baroque era—'Schönbrunn yellow' walls broken with dark green tiles and shutters: urbane but informal, emphatic but unassertive, a perfectly preserved fragment of the Habsburg Empire. There was not a soul in sight.

Before Coates had time to pinch himself, however, this parody which was undistinguishable from reality came to life. As he climbed down from the Buick, a reception committee appeared on the steps. One could have faulted the leading figure (who turned out to be the 'director') for having an open white shirt under his well-pressed black suit. But that omission was more than made up for by his smile, which had none of the watchfulness of the Budapest bureaucrats. The remainder were a strangely assorted army of officials and domestics, yet each was correctly dressed according to his traditional calling. The gardener who drove the car away had a long green apron and pulled at a non-existent forelock. The maid, still under twenty, looked crisp yet very, very soft in her black and white—an admirable example of what the Lord could still do in Communist Hungary when it pleased him. The 'receptionist,' who sat at a tiny writing desk in

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the hall, had a grey uniform with the crossed keys of his calling on the lapels. Coates deposited his passport with this worthy—one solitary concession to officialdom—and was ushered straight up to his room.

This lay at the head of a broad stairway designed for crinolines to descend. It was obviously the best bedroom in the house with a private bathroom (sanitary fittings by Schmidt & Co, Wien, 1908) and a verandah, with deck chairs at the ready, which ran over the french windows of the drawing-room below. The bedroom furniture was English enough to make Coates feel instantly at home—mahogany cupboards and tallboys, a leather easy chair and a solid bed with a mattress all in one piece, a rare phenomenon anywhere east of the Swiss border.

As the day progressed, he realised to his delight that he was virtually alone in the place. A swarthy couple—who turned out to be the Deputy Mayor of Sofia and his wife on a 'fraternal visit' to Hungary—appeared on the terrace at dinner time. But they bolted their food in silence like a couple of famished hares and left almost before Coates had unfolded his napkin, so that the illusion of sole possession was preserved. After dinner he was taken on a thorough inspection of the house and grounds by the cheerful little director. This individual freely admitted he had once been the manager of a hotel in Veszprém and had only joined the local branch of the Communist party to get this job. But about the house itself he was more reticent. Yes, of course, it had been a former 'Herrschaftshaus.' That was all. He was oddly respectful. Coates had learned enough even during his one week in the Hungary of 1956 not to press him.

His retirement to bed was positively feudal. The waiter approached him as to his wishes for breakfast; the director saw him to the foot of the stairs; and the adorable maid slipped out of the bathroom in front of him like a black and white cat, having already drawn his bath the moment he thought about taking one. But the management's masterpiece of local colour was reserved for the last. Half an hour later, when Coates was stretched out, warm and nostalgic, between the linen sheets, there was a discreet tap on the door and there appeared a dignified, silvery-haired figure who could only have been the original butler of the house. He too was traditionally dressed for the part, in that dark green 'Loden' suit with stag-horn buttons

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and pale green facings which had once been the off-duty uniform of the old Empire. He enquired in very respectable English whether Coates was comfortable and whether he required something to read. After being assured on both points he uttered a grave "Goodnight" and withdrew.

That audible silence which, in all Europe, you only get in the northern fjords, the Alpine peaks, and the Hungarian puszta, descended on the yellow house. Coates slipped into a restful sleep, broken only by agreeable Lewis Carroll dreams in which he was chasing a black and white cat with a lace cap through a field of sun-flowers.

* * * * *

The day of his arrival had been sultry. He awoke to a fresh, sparkling Sunday morning which gave promise of pleasant heat. A late breakfast, a swim and a sunbathe on the private beach of the house and a stroll out to the village church brought him nicely to lunchtime. He had reluctantly announced his intention of driving to Gyoer in the afternoon, where he was to hand over his official car and board the train for Vienna and the Western world.

Coates would probably have left Hungary without knowing anything strange had happened to him if the affable director had not insisted on their taking a final glass of Tokay together in his 'office.' This room, which ran off from the main drawing-room, was clearly the old library, and though most of the bookshelves had been replaced by metal filing cabinets, the carpets and the furniture still gave a note of cultured leisure. A bottle of the now rare '4-Butt' Tokay was brought in and the two men were left alone.

Coates had developed a liking for his bogus Communist host and started saying the obvious things to please him. He complimented him on the cuisine, on the beds, on the restful situation and on the well-tended park. Then he went on affably, between sips of the heavy golden wine :

"Now, please do not misunderstand what I'm going to say, but the thing which has impressed me most is the way in which you have kept up the traditional atmosphere of the place. It's a lovely old house and probably a historic one and, frankly, I was astonished to find it run, not on a 'Comrade Waiter' basis, if you know what I mean."

Gordon Shepherd

The Director evidently did, and showed every sign of approval.

"I am very glad that has struck you, Mr. Coates," he replied. "And I would like to ask you to mention it—very discreetly of course—should you be writing about your trip to Budapest. The fact is, I had a little difficulty getting my point of view accepted and the Ministry may not be quite happy about it now, despite the recent rather changed political atmosphere . . . er . . . the attacks on dogmatism, I should have said. But I've gone ahead on my own and wherever the staff is recruited from and whether they are party members or not, I train them to regard people here as guests entitled to proper respect."

Emboldened, Coates continued :

"But, surely, they can't all be novices who need telling these things? The splendid looking old gentleman who looked in on me late last night for example, he must have belonged to the original house. . . ."

The Communist put his glass down with a bang.

"Which old gentleman; what did he look like?"

The questions were hasty and anxious.

Puzzled, Coates started to give as exact a description as he could remember. But before he had finished, the director was on his feet. He moved over to the writing desk, rummaged in the bottom drawer and returned with a silver-framed photograph, which he thrust into the Englishman's hands.

"Was this him?" he demanded.

Looking out at Coates from the silver frame was an elderly man resplendent in the full dress court costume of a vanished generation. His coat was studded with the jewelled stars and crosses of a dozen orders. From his neck dangled the chain of the Golden Fleece. But the face was unmistakably the same.

"That is the man without a shadow of doubt," he replied. "But who is he, and why should he be dressed like this?"

The director took back the photograph and looked at it for a moment without a word. When he spoke it was in a curiously flat voice.

"That, Mr. Coates, is Prince Rastenbergh in his uniform of Court Chamberlain to the Emperor Franz Josef. He not only 'belonged to

this house' as you put it. The house belonged to him, with many another besides. And he's been dead for exactly seventy-two years."

This time it was Coates' turn to plant his glass hurriedly on the table. He said in a half-joking voice:

"But that's absurd. I tell you the fellow spoke to me. Don't tell me you believe in such capitalist things as ghosts?"

"We are not allowed to," came the strange reply, "but it's not so absurd as you think."

The director got to his feet and returned the photograph carefully to its drawer.

"I would like you to hear about this before you go," he said. "But let's go where we are sure to be... undisturbed. I think a walk down to the lake would be best."

Puzzled but pleasantly excited, Coates followed him back into the drawing-room and through the french windows into the garden. They walked under the scented shade of a rose pergola which stretched almost to the beach. The little wooden landing stage, carried on props twenty yards out into the shallow water, was deserted in the mid-afternoon heat. In front of them, for further than the eye could see, was Balaton, Europe's second largest lake. No shore, no sail, and no wave broke it. It lay like some vast milky-blue pearl, heaving slightly in the haze of a Hungarian summer day. Even in a police state, this was the perfect place for confidences.

The little director scattered a dreaming shoal of white-fish with a pebble and then began his tale:

"You noticed I had the photograph handy and that I immediately showed it to you. Well, the truth is, I wasn't as surprised as I looked. In fact, I was half-expecting this to happen. Yet it's difficult to explain what went before. This... ghost... if you want to use the word, has nothing to do with suicide, murder, or clanking chains. What is even odder, it has only appeared in the last year or two. Old Rastenberg's nephew, who lived on in the house until 1926, saw nothing, or if he did said nothing about it. And it's not as if the loss of the house itself could have any sinister associations for the family. It wasn't... requisitioned by us or anything like that. The nephew sold it to the government quite legally in Horthy's day, and it passed to the People's Democracy as a piece of ordinary State property after

the war. The first thing we did with it was to bring tubercular children here. No, Mr. Coates, what you have had the privilege of seeing is what I might call the world's first *ideological* ghost."

He shot a quick smile at his listener before continuing. "You will be saying to yourself: 'Do even the ghosts in this country have to be ideological?' But I assure you in this case it is so. That room is not often used. In fact, since we started to run the place as a Government Rest House eighteen months ago it's been slept in five times. Three occupants, including yourself, were Western visitors. The first was the French Minister in Budapest who came here for a night last summer. The second was the President of the English Pen Club who was here on a congress a few weeks afterwards. The third was yourself. And on each occasion, a figure dressed exactly as you described last night . . . let's call him Prince Rastenberg for convenience . . . went into the room and enquired politely after their comfort. I suppose you might say he was behaving like the perfect host he must have been to the sort of guests he would have liked to welcome. And those, Mr. Coates, are the only three occasions when I knew for certain that he has appeared."

There was something reserved in the tone of the last few words. Coates put the obvious question:

"What about the other two times?"

Despite the utter solitude of the hot wooden landing stage, the director looked around him before replying:

"That is the whole point. One was the Security Chief of Slovakia—a place where the Rastenbergs once had a lot of property and still have many relatives. He stopped here on his way back to Bratislava from Budapest. He never reached Bratislava. He woke up complaining of a fever and pains in his head and died in delirium in Gyoer hospital two days later. The second was the Communist party secretary of this region. He never woke up at all. I found him myself, already quite stiff between the sheets at ten in the morning. His eyes were wide open and fixed on the door, and there was a look in them that took me months to forget."

Coates was at a loss to know what to say. The little man had become so desperately serious that he tried to reassure him with a half-bantering question.

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"I take it in that case you wouldn't sleep there yourself?" he asked.

His companion faced him sharply.

"I'm only a party member, and that, as I told you, to get this job. What's more, I've done all in my power to give . . . shall I say, no offence while in this house. But I wouldn't spend a night in that room, not for all the fish in Lake Balaton."

And he did something which Coates never before nor since saw a Communist do. He crossed himself hurriedly before leading his guest back to the waiting car.

The Rural Pan

BY PETER GREEN

Yet half a beast is the great god Pan,
To laugh as he sits by the river,
Making a poet out of a man :
The true gods sigh for the cost and pain,—
For the reed which grows nevermore again
As a reed with the reeds in the river.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

IT is strange, considering his immense popularity, how few writers have studied the works of Kenneth Grahame. This particularly applies to the early essays he published in the *St James's Gazette* and the *National Observer*, which were afterwards collected in a volume with the significant title of *Pagan Papers*. The centenary of Grahame's birth falls in March 1959 ; and as his biographer I have followed, with spellbound fascination, the tangled thread which *Pagan Papers* offers to the student of nineteenth-century literature and society. In particular I was struck, during my researches, by the frequency and variety with which the Pan-symbol appears, not only in Grahame's work, but the writings of his contemporaries. This essay is an attempt to explain that peculiar phenomenon of the Nineties, the Rural Pan.

Pagan Papers appeared in October 1893 : a pleasantly printed and produced little volume, which flaunted the *imprimatur* of The Bodley Head and an arresting frontispiece by Aubrey Beardsley. Beardsley's elegant, perverse, Satanic Pan made a piquant contrast with the rural essay to which it mainly referred : the incongruity is significant.

The reviewers gave *Pagan Papers* a very mixed reception indeed. Those who enjoyed the book praised its vitality, gusto and colour ; but others were not slow to attack its derivativeness, preciosity and affectations, while the *Scotsman* declared, with Calvinistic rectitude,

that the essays did not manifestly appear to be the work of a Christian. What strikes one most about these notices is their essential triviality. The only periodical that came remotely near the heart of the matter was the short-lived *Critic*, in a review written six years after publication—surely a record delay?—which at least touches on the main theme implicit in the book's title:

Mr Grahame [observes this leisurely reviewer] shows that the old gods, for so long slaves of the ink-pot, have yet some work left in them, and, if harnessed all together and touched up with the whip of invention, may be made to drag a conceit through the ruts and bog-holes of a dozen paragraphs. Being capable of so much, he is surely capable of better. Let him turn the gods out to grass, and go, himself, in the shafts. Than we shall see what we shall see.

It was easy to be wise after the event—by 1899 not only *The Golden Age* but also *Dream Days* had been published—but there was a good deal of truth in this criticism, nevertheless. The aesthetic movement had converted the natural impulses of anti-industrialists into a convention of 'literary paganism,' which was no less remote from reality than the profiteering Philistinism it opposed. Grahame only succeeded inasmuch as he preserved his paganism from urban faking and coterie art.

He was quite explicit as to the main impulse behind this concept of life: it was an antidote to 'the shadow of Scotch-Calvinist-devil-worship' on which he had been brought up. But, as in politics, he was forced to share his creed with a large number of people whose ideas and ethics differed radically from his. Arnold's gentlemanly rural pantheism was one thing: the aberrations of Decadents and Satanists and the rest of the queer crew who populate Mario Praz's *The Romantic Agony* were quite another.

What Grahame failed to see was that neo-Paganism implied something more than a relaxation of puritan taboos and the sensuous appreciation of Nature's bounty. It had almost nothing in common with the pre-Christian ethic on which it was supposedly modelled. It was not, as Huxley suggested, Catholicism with the Christianity taken out, but a conscious *anti-Christianity* that made the antics of Aleister

Crowley and the rest of the Black Magic brigade logically only too admissible. It was in vain that Arthur Machen pointed out the fallacy of supposing that 'whereas good Christians are obliged to lead very strict lives, good pagans could do exactly as they pleased,' and reminded his readers that the stark elements of ancient morality 'make up a picture of old Greece that is strangely different from the Rosy Lubberland of our Neo-pagans.' License was precisely what the rebels wanted, and they found it easy enough to manufacture an extenuating myth in support of their activities.

Today their daring naughtinesses, so hedged about with an ingrained aptitude for respectable public behaviour, strike us as comic and a little sad—sad, because they reveal so clearly the desperate underlying need for a charitable and nourishing faith. Browning's Mr Sludge, the fake medium, is only a symbol of the mushrooming esoteric cults that sprang up to satisfy this inarticulate need, which got scant comfort from the Metaphysical Society or Bradley's *Appearance and Reality*. There was indeed Auguste Comte, with his 'deification of Humanity itself as the Great Being or Goddess,' but this was too vast an abstraction for easy emotional comprehension. Clough's acid *New Decalogue* had knocked the last nail in the coffin of the Victorian Established Church. What then was left but to go by opposites and turn the Established Church inside-out, reverse all its values? An immense *Angst* and weariness was abroad: as Arthur Symons wrote,

Trouble has come upon us like a sudden cloud,
A sudden summer cloud with thunder in its wings.
There is an end for us of old familiar things
Now that this desolating voice has spoken aloud.

The sillier manifestations of this revolt are epitomised in the single number of William Sharp's *Pagan Review*, which appeared in 1892. It bears the epigraph 'Sic transit gloria Grundi,' and consists in the main of sultry melodramatic stories bearing titles like 'The Rape of the Sabine Women' or 'Dionysos in India.' These were all written by Sharp himself under various pseudonyms. Some are unintentionally funny in the extreme; the prize goes to 'The Oread,' in which we are treated to the entrancing spectacle of a young man in full shooting rig, Norfolk jacket and all, chasing a naked classical nymph

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over a Scottish grouse-moor. 'The Black Madonna,' an extraordinary play stuffed with mother-goddesses, blood-sacrifice, crucifixion, sex, sadism and pseudo-primitivism, reads like a *New Statesman* parody of *The Plumed Serpent*—though it does contain one immortal scrap of dialogue :

The Black Madonna (trembling and strangely troubled) : What would'st thou ?

Bihr : Thou !

In 1891 W. F. Barry published an extremely sensible article on neo-paganism in the *Quarterly Review*. This traced its literary genesis (from the moral viewpoint) in Hume, Rousseau, Voltaire, Goethe and Lessing ; and, though overtly hostile to the core of natural passion which informed it, hit with deadly accuracy on the weaknesses inherent in its excesses. Of the retreat to mediaevalism Barry wrote : 'Despite its gorgeous tones we are conscious of an unreality. The masked figures, who are so well made up, cannot take off their visors without the enchantment vanishing . . . They could not raise the dead, but they found huge delight in imitating their grave-clothes.'

Barry deplored the usurpation of reason by 'the thrills and spasms of a nerve, or complications of intense and faint feelings.' He attacked the effeminacy and hedonism which characterized neo-pagan behaviour, attributing it (and here he had Henley, of all people, on his side) to sixty years of peace, idleness, and over-education. But his shrewdest thrust was when he compared the new recidivists with their spiritual ancestor Julian the Apostate. All that Libanius and the philosophers could do for Julian was to vote addresses of condolence to the gods of the *ancien régime* : Apollo and Jove could not be revived by the whim of an Imperial *littérateur*. 'From a mere literature,' asks Barry, 'when has religion gone down into the popular imagination ?' Great Pan was dead ; and not the combined ministrations of rebels, aesthetes, pastoralists and Satanists could ever wish him into life again, though they tried every trick they knew for more than thirty years.

'Pan,' in fact, was a convenient short-hand term for their own anarchic emotional urges : he had become a literary symbol, without

any highest common factor except a vague full-blooded animalism. The frequency of references to him in the literature, the recurrent representations of him in the art of the period offer an interesting side-light on that pantheistic nature-worship of which, over the years, he had become the convenient and accepted deity. The tradition ran unbroken from Coleridge and Wordsworth (on both of whom Hazlitt had some shrewd remarks to make in this connection) through Keats, Shelley, Arnold, the Brownings, Swinburne and Stevenson—who regarded Pan as the emblem of Anti-Science as well as Anti-Calvin. The Goat-foot peeped out in Brooke and 'Saki' and E. M. Forster's early short stories. He inspired countless poems, including a volume by Miss Eleanor Farjeon. Maurice Hewlett and Richard Le Gallienne flirted with him. John Buchan had a personal experience of Panic terror while climbing in the Bavarian Alps: 'Sebastian the guide had seen the goat-foot god, or something of the kind—he was forest born, and Bavarian peasants are very near primeval things—and he had made me feel his terror.'

The drawings and paintings told a similar story. Osbert Burdett said of Beardsley's 'The Mysterious Rose-Garden' that 'it is conventional art listening to the whisper of creative imagination in the familiar and formal garden of Victorian times: it is *the return of Pan, the repudiation of authority*' (italics mine). This was the period that could find no room for the grotesque, that held Dickens in some suspicion and distrusted *Punch* till it had been thoroughly institutionalized. Sometimes, as in Beardsley, Pan's healthy phallicism was subtly converted into urban pornography. Sometimes—and C. H. Shannon's woodcuts in the *Dial* are the most striking examples—he was portrayed as a dark, cruel, towering, monolithic figure: 'Pan Mountain' shows him crouched, merging with the rocky hillside, his pipes turning to pendent rock pinnacles, his half-crossed legs to wild foothills. The Earth-symbolism is obvious.

There is equal variety in the literary treatment. What *was* he doing, the Great God Pan, down in the reeds by the river? What springs of the imagination, long choked with rational rubble, broke loose now to swell the stream where he dabbled his cloven hooves? To each, it seemed, he wore a different appearance. For some he incarnated terror and cruelty, the rejected forces of nature taking their

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revenge. In one of Machen's novels, for instance, a girl who sees Pan goes insane; and 'Saki,' in 'The Music on the Hill,' brings to a very nasty end a sophisticated London woman who is foolish enough to doubt his existence. More often his sexual attributes are emphasised, the fierce unrestrained lechery free of all human conventions: Browning gives an excellent example of this:

So lay this Maid-Moon clasped around and caught
By rough red Pan, the god of all that tract . . .
Bruised to the breast of Pan, half-god half-brute,
Raked by his bristly boar-sward while he lapped
—Never say, kissed her! that were to pollute
Love's language . . .

This concept, which appeared strongly to the Decadents for several fairly obvious reasons, was occasionally watered down to suit more delicate and conventional tastes. T. S. Moore, for instance, in *Pan's Prophecy*, turns the demi-god into a confidant for the love-lorn, a kind of primitive Miss Lonelyhearts:

. . . ofttimes nymph or faun
To tell of their heart-breaking disappointments
Seeketh me in the lone mid-forest lawn;
Or with torn flesh, sprained joints requiring ointments,
Fainting, will reach my hill-crest cave at dawn.

The last two lines I have quoted from Moore—lines which Grahame was to echo in *The Wind in the Willows*—bring us to a third aspect of Pan which the neo-pagans emphasised: his rôle as protector and healer of herds and country folk. This is the Pan whom Keats drew in *Endymion*, the 'breather round our farms / To keep off mildew and all weather harms'; and this is the Pan on whom Grahame largely founds his own variant. The basic concept was admirably expressed by Maurice Hewlett in a letter to Milton Browner, an American journalist:

The whole thing is really a myth. The root idea, I suppose, is the oneness of creation—man as a natural force, differing in no essential way from plants and animals. Then God is reduced to the

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same expression, and He and Man, and the Wind and Weather, Trees, Sheep, Love, Life, Death, Fear, all play their parts out and meet and merge, and mate and mingle. . . .

Richard Le Gallienne, too, had a word for Pan as a symbol of revolt against hypocritical conventions :

Pan is unmistakably the father of poets, and Pan, it is to be feared, is a god who is not always to be found in full evening dress and in perfect taste . . . He is often found lacking in 'refinement,' as understood in drawing-rooms and seminaries. His exquisite products are usually brought about by processes quite coarse and shocking to refined individuals.

Obviously the same fallacy is latent in the Pan cult as practised by the neo-pagans, and in Morris's Pre-Raphaelism : a sophisticated, predominantly urban *élite* cannot recapture the instincts of genuine primitivism, only self-consciously imitate its external manifestations. These have a compulsive attraction for any jaded intellectual : they contain something of which he has been totally starved. At the same time he can only consider them through the polarised lens of his own highly self-conscious preconceptions. This becomes at once apparent when we consider Pan's history in the ancient world. He was a primitive mountain dæmon, half-beast, half-man : ithyphallic, sender of epilepsy and bad dreams, protector of herds, saviour from plague, an ambivalent demigod, whose image was whipped magically with squills in time of dearth. Nowhere did his cult touch the higher life of the society or the higher religion of the state ; but this did not stop urban philosophers from dabbling in its existing earthiness. As Farnell mildly observed, 'there is no Greek cult so primitive and rustic but what some tolerant philosopher could infuse ethical thought into it.' Grahame would have approved of Socrates, on the banks of the Ilissus, praying to Pan—of all deities—for 'inner beauty of soul.'

The neo-paganism of the Nineties had its exact analogue in Greece and Alexandria during the late Hellenistic period—after Alexander's conquests had spread urban cosmopolitanism, but before the supremacy of Rome was achieved. The scholar-poets in their great cities sought

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the same synthetic replacements for the natural roots they had lost. They cultivated a conventional pastoralism, they wrote pseudo-epics in their studies (but never drew a sword) and they had a passion for primitive cults, preferably with a strong phallic ritual : not realising that now fertility was no longer a matter of life and death every year, the ritual had lost much of its true significance, and merely served as an excuse for sophisticated self-indulgence. These pallid Syracusans and Alexandrians envied the uncomplicated life that still went on in the 'Arcadian' countryside, but they could not live it themselves ; they did their best by writing bucolic elegies.

Grahame was thus in a curious position when dealing with Pan. Parts of the legend he must have found frightening and repellent ; but the rest struck an answering chord in his own nature, and served as the basis for his own private mythology. It does not seem to have occurred to him that the subtle emasculation he performed invalidated the entire concept, or made it at the best a psychological prop for his own emotional instability. He picked out the attributes he needed, rejected those that did not suit him, invented others when necessary, and in general found himself walking an uneasy path between quagmires of sex on one side and terror on the other.

In *Pagan Papers* and several of the other early essays, Pan is associated by Grahame with the spring, but not in any crudely regenerative sense ; and in 'The Lost Centaur' he is treated as a demigod

in whom the submerged human system peeps out but fitfully, at exalted moments. He, the peevish and irascible, shy of trodden ways and pretty domesticities, is linked to us by little but his love of melody ; but for which saving grace, the hair would soon creep up from thigh to horn of him. At times he will still do us a friendly turn : will lend a helping hand to poor little Psyche, wilfully seeking her own salvation ; will stand shoulder to shoulder with us on Marathon plain. But in the main his sympathies are first for the beast, to which his horns are never horrific, but, with his hairy pelt, ever natural and familiar, and his voice (with its talk of help and healing) not harsh or dissonant, but voice of very brother as well as very god.

Pan pipes at Mapledurham or in Hurley backwater ; he is, to quote

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the title of the essay which most concerns him, the Rural Pan, inimical both to fashionable dandy and plebeian pleasure-seeker, to be sought neither in Piccadilly, nor at Ascot or the Guards' Club in Maidenhead. No, his place is by the quiet river-bank, or

under the great shadow of Streatley Hill . . . or better yet, pushing an explorer's prow up the remote untravelled Thame, till Dorchester's stately roof broods over the quiet fields. In solitudes such as this Pan sits and dabbles, and all the air is full of the music of his piping . . . Out of hearing of all the clamour, the rural Pan may be found stretched on Ranmore Common, loitering under Abinger pines, or prone by the secluded stream of the sinuous Mole, abounding in friendly greetings for his foster-brothers the dab-chick and the water-rat.

Pan avoids high roads and railways, preferring sheep-tracks, and the animal company they afford. He is not unsocial, but 'shy of the company of his more showy brother-deities'; his pleasure is more to go among unpretentious country folk, labourers and shepherds, 'simple cheery sinners.' He is, after all, only half a god, and there is a strong earthy element in him. Like the Scholar-Gipsy, he turns up occasionally in remote inns, disguised as a hedger-and-ditcher, and 'strange lore and quaint fancy he will then impart, in the musical Wessex or Mercian he has learned to speak so naturally'—but it is only after he has gone that his identity is discovered. Commercialism, jerry-building, railways are reducing his domain: but there are still commons and sheep-downs where he can hide, though not for many years to come.

When we come to 'The Piper at the Gates of Dawn,' the concept has been developed and modified. The vision of Pan may perhaps stand as the supreme example of nineteenth century neo-pagan mysticism: intensely felt, flawlessly written, with an exquisite, balance between chaste simplicity of style and the rich, colourful, almost sensuous atmosphere which the words themselves evoke. Yet this said, it must be admitted that Grahame's achievement here succeeded only by a hair's-breadth, and could never be repeated. As Mr MacNeice remarked, apostrophising his hypothetical Communist, 'this poise is perfect, but maintained for one day only.' The 'kindly

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demigod' whom Grahame presents has been transformed: desexualised, paternalised, the Friend and Helper of Victorian iconography, a cross between Aesculapius and the Good Shepherd. He contains in his pagan body something of those Christian traits which Grahame sought for so long and never found—or dared to accept. This Pan is an extraordinary syncretic compromise, a projection of Edwardian ruralism, post-Beardsley social opposition, wistful yearning for conformity, an urge towards some replacement for Arnold's God as a comforting Father Figure. It is significant that this Pan's last and most welcome gift (which he never had in antiquity, and which seems to be a creation of Grahame's own) is forgetfulness. The awe of that ultimate revelation was too much for the small creatures who inhabited Grahame's fantasy-world: it may have been too much for Grahame himself—or he may have shrunk from the recognition of its transience.

I mentioned earlier that 'Pan' was a convenient symbol into which writers could pour their own anarchic urges: a receptacle for the id, so to speak. It is clear that this applies to Grahame with some exactness: his version of Pan provides a justification for his personal habits by giving them the sanction of a semi-divine myth. But when we examine his portrait more closely, we get the unescapable impression that this Pan was painted with one eye at least in the mirror: that Grahame has not only trimmed his god to suit his fancy, but undergone a considerable degree of self-identification with him. A change of names, and every passage would be accepted, with minor adjustments, as autobiographical: the distrust of Society, the country pottering, the love of animals, the fear of industrial development. The demi-god who talks 'musical Wessex' in a country pub and is accepted by the locals as one of themselves at once recalls Grahame's peculiar delight at being mistaken for a Cornish fisherman.

He is, we may guess, all the more pleased because—in Grahame's myth—though *in* the country, he is not *of* it. This is a fact of some importance. Grahame's mythical ruralist—and indeed Grahame himself—never *does* anything in the country; he may be 'addicted to the kindly soil' but not 'to the working thereof.' When ploughing is being done, he is meditating by the furrow. At harvest-time he is

gliding past in a canoe or skiff. He is perpetually on holiday ; and this is the weakest aspect of his myth. It is a week-end myth : his real work, never acknowledged, lies elsewhere, in the City. Even Rat, we remember, was in the way in a harvest field.

If Pan is an aspect of Grahame's personality—or, to be more precise, a *persona* into which he could put himself at a heightened level—we are forced to consider the elimination of the demi-god's sexual aspect from this presentation in more personal terms. There is no evidence to suggest that Grahame was sexually abnormal ; but a good deal—his own not least—which indicates that he preserved (perhaps as one element only in a dual nature) what may be described as a pre-pubertal outlook : the clear child's vision, with its characteristic selections and omissions. In 1897 we find him writing to Helen Dunham : ' I too have always kept a scrap-book . . . of places where I'm going to live "when I'm grown up" . . . I trust he will be more fortunate than I, and really attain, some day—only that would entail growing up, wouldn't it? Perhaps things are better as they are . . . ' And Miss Dunham recalled him saying on another occasion in 1896 (she had expressed herself 'afraid that he might grow up') : "No—I don't think I shall—I've just been writing about a circus and I found I didn't feel a bit grown up." At the very end of his life he wrote in a letter to the father of a childish admirer that 'she mustn't grow any older, or she will get away from Mole and Rat.' He would, I suspect, have willingly numbered himself amongst the rare souls whom C. E. Maud described as 'those who have kept fresh in their hearts "the everlasting child," whose eyes look out still with wonder on a wondrous world, who . . . hear the pipes of Pan among the rushes, and the flowers talking in the forest.'

It is certainly true that many of Grahame's values and insights were almost uncannily similar to those of children or primitive savages : his curious indifferences, amounting at times to callousness, over adult relationships ; his intense self-liberating imagination ; his timelessness, his natural animistic sense, which endowed even lifeless objects with a personality of their own ; his tendency to confuse matter and thought, internal and external, dream and reality. All these phenomena can be readily encountered in a book such as Jean Piaget's *The Child's Conception of the World* : Grahame would have readily

The Rural Pan

understood the child who, when asked why bears had four feet, replied : ' Because they've been naughty and God has punished them.' It was half a shrewd and ambitious businessman, half an innocent child who was introduced by Lane to Henry Harland after the publication of *Pagan Papers*, and who became perhaps the most improbable contributor that the newly founded *Yellow Book* ever acquired.

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